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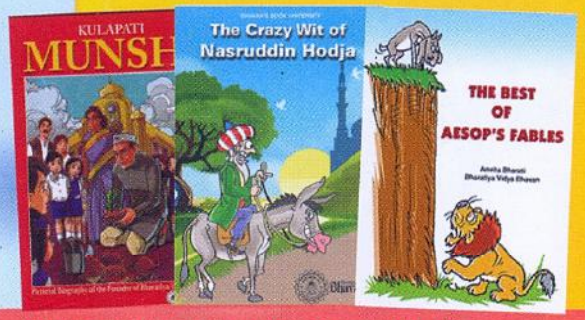

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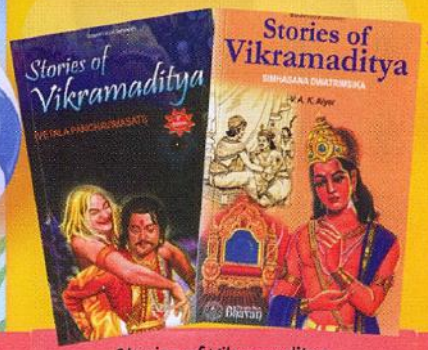

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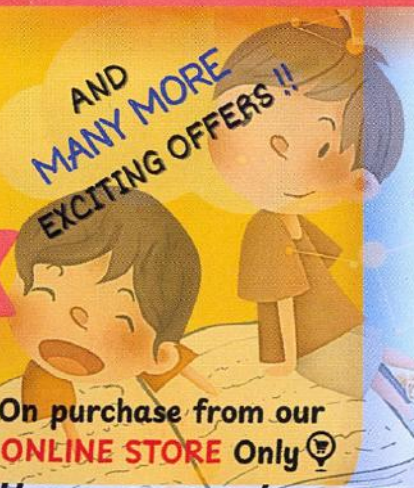

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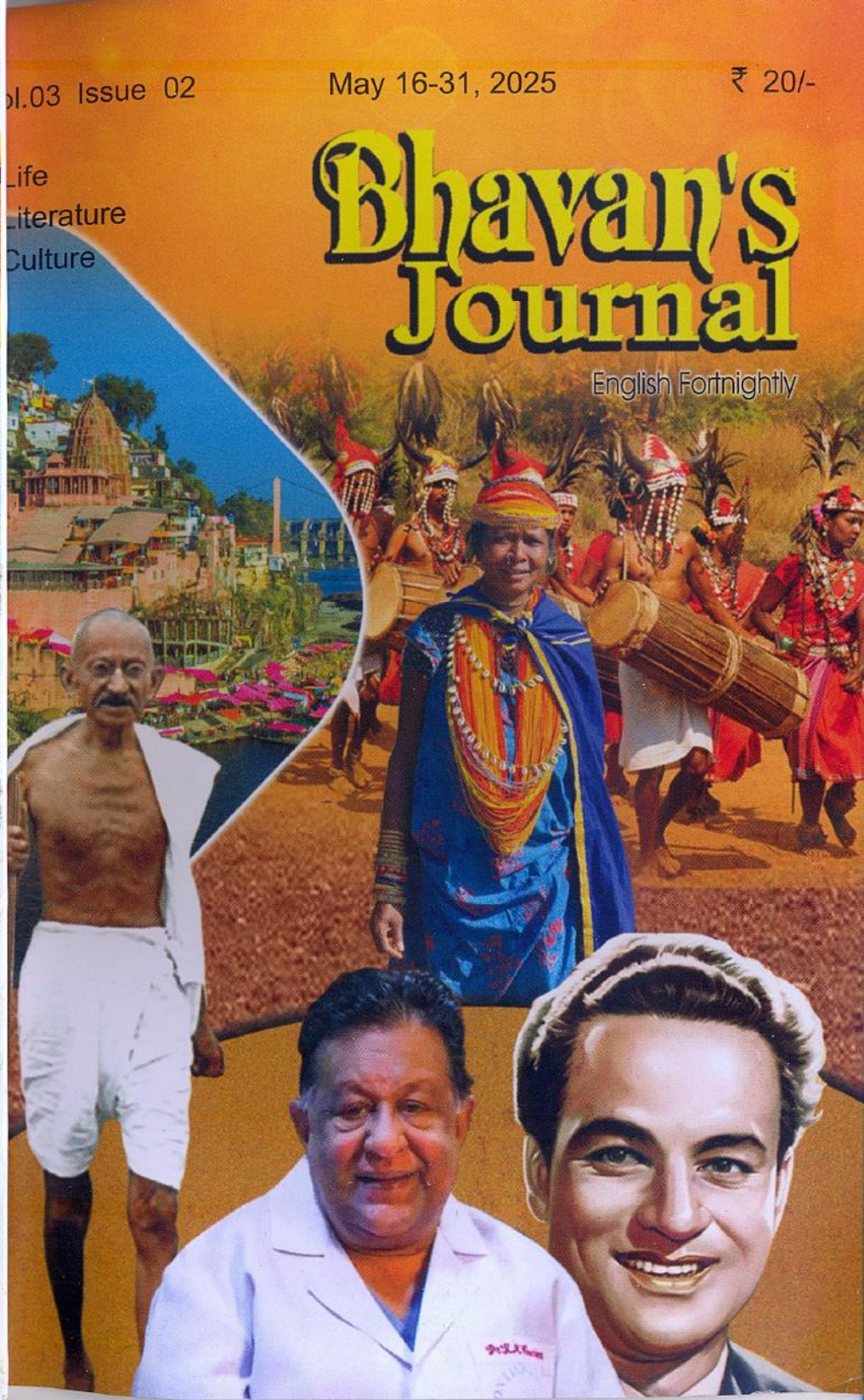

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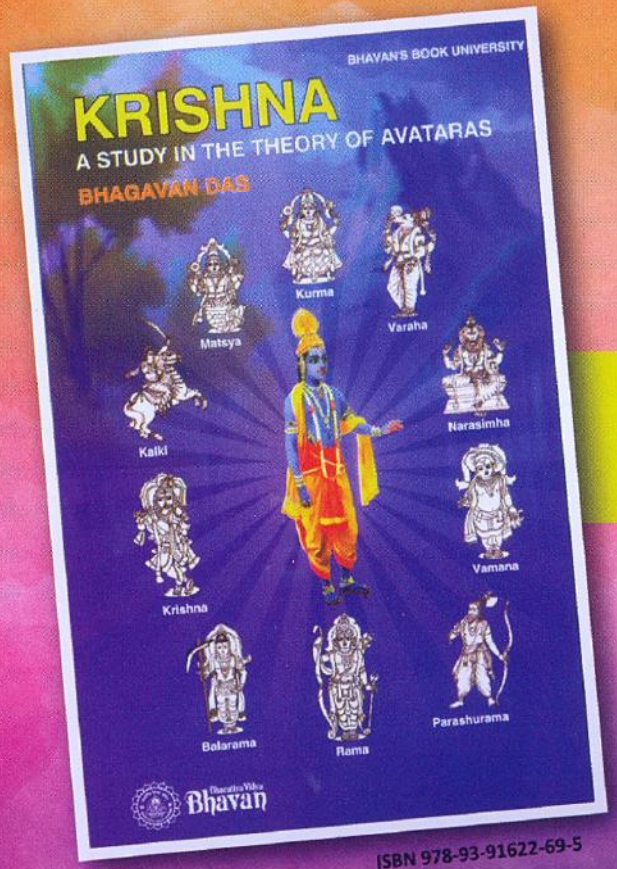

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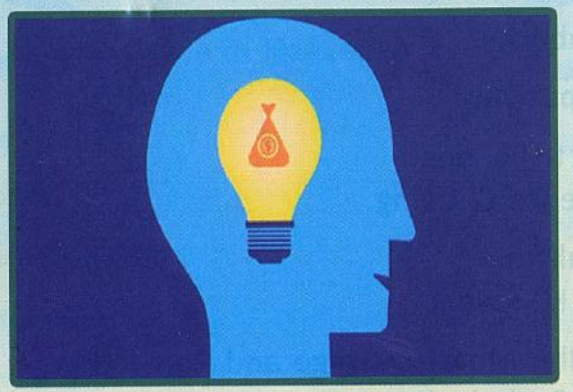
आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side –Rigveda, I-89-i

SAGE SPEAK



अतितृष्णा न कर्तव्या तृष्णां नैव परित्यजेत् ।
शनैः शनैश्च भोक्तव्यं स्वयं वित्तमुपार्जितम् ॥

Extreme yearning should be avoided without rejecting desire itself. One should steadily enjoy self-earned wealth in moderation.

Bhavan's Journal

Vol. 03 Issue 02

16-31 May, 2025

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Highlights of the Issue

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FLASH BACK

Bhoodan Revolution

Jayaprakash Narayan

I was in America 25 years ago. I became a Communist. I returned from there as a full-fledged Communist. But soon it became clear to me that the dream-world which I had built up in my conception was wrong. I felt that a great experiment launched in a very big country under the able leaders had come to naught. The methods followed in that one-sixth part of the globe—I mean Russia—could not bring freedom and equality. I was not satisfied with what had come out of that experiment. Today the same conditions continue there. Till such time as a real revolution does not take place in Russia, there is no hope for the people of that country.

I realise that if, along with Socialism, we do not have democracy then we cannot achieve our object. I was always convinced and remain so, that there is no advance possible for human society till such time as everyone does not have equality of opportunity. We have always desired that changes should come in, in our society as soon as possible. All these years, this conviction was growing deeper

within me that our object can be achieved only through Sarvodaya. That feeling was growing. But I was to reach the goal. And the path became increasingly clearer to me as the Bhoodan movement developed. So finally, at Bodh Gaya, I decided to leave politics and devote myself to this work. I feel that all people who believe in Sarvodaya ideals should take a similar course.

The position is very clear. If through State power, we cannot build Sarvodaya, and if a non-violent revolution in our society is not possible through the administrative machinery, then what other alternative remains before us for building up a new society? I feel that the path of changing society in accordance with Mahatmaji's ideals is an entirely new one, which has hitherto not been attempted in the world. And working upon the premises laid down by the Father of the Nation, Vinobaji has successfully reduced it to a science.

What can be the method of pushing forward the viewpoint of truth, and what can be the method of mass *agraha* (insistence)? Vinobaji has placed before us his ideas on Bhoodan and Sampattidan, which are meant only for pushing forward this conception. I feel that there is no path better than this. The basic question is not how much land we got in Bhoodan. The important thing is that this point of view is being more and more accepted that land belongs to society, that

property belongs to no individual. Bhoodan and Sampattidan have a tremendous revolutionary significance because they non-violently make their way forward and the principles are being increasingly accepted by Indian society. No doubt, our views can be propagated through pamphlets and speeches. But, as long as that propaganda is not accompanied by actual movement, which affects the lives of the people, till then no movement for social transformation can achieve a mass character.

I am reminded of the Salt Satyagraha. When Gandhiji embarked on this novel method, there were many who pooh-poohed and laughed at it. But that small-scale movement—the Salt Satyagraha—transformed the entire nation. Indian people, who were afraid of the mighty British Empire, got courage and became fearless. Today, the same role is being played more or less by the Bhoodan movement in transforming the society. As far as the question of transformation of Indian society is concerned, there are a lot of people who think well of the Bhoodan movement. I would tell them that if they think that Bhoodan is just one of the scores of other work being done in this country, then they have not fully understood its implications.

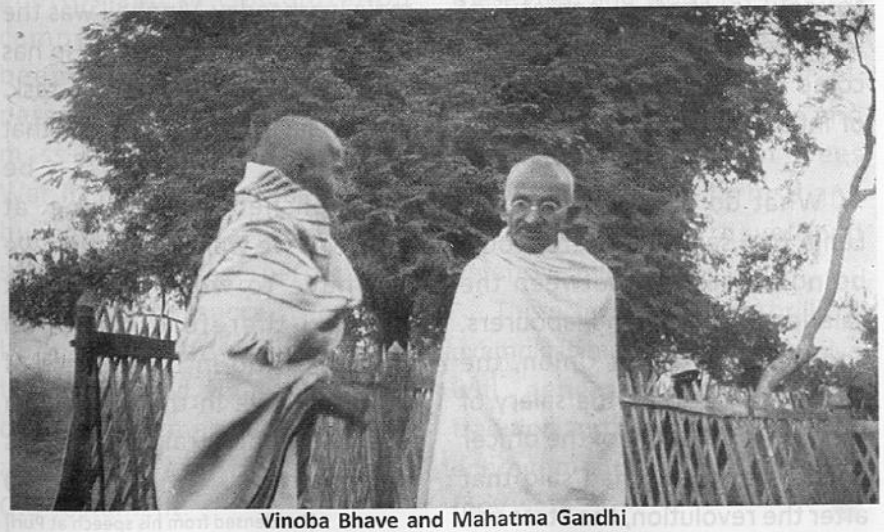
If you consider that Bhoodan is just one of the scores of other activities, then nothing is going to materialise. Not that other activities are bad or unimportant. We will have to put all our energy into this Bhoodan work. We will have to jump into it with all our energies, just as in times of revolution. We have to bring about this revolution in the minds and thoughts of every one in all homes and villages of our motherland. We have to make every one realise that an economic revolution has to take place in our society. For the masses of our people, economic factors are the most dominant. That is why Vinobaji has taken up the economic issue with a view to changing the society, and has been telling us how there exists a non-violent way of solving economic problems.

The Bhoodan movement has been progressing during the last four years. We have received over 35 lakhs of acres. In Orissa, over 100 villages have been fully donated to the Bhoodan movement, which means that in these 100 villages at least, the land revolution is complete. The inhabitants of these villages have given up their property rights over land.

Experience has shown and will show that, to the extent that the Bhoodan movement advances, all other constructive activities advance and the creative capacities of our masses will develop. Actually speaking, I visualise so many things to be done once the Bhoodan movement is complete. But we have not enough workers to cope with the task.

The main idea is that we should bring about a revolution in people's thoughts. That is not likely to take place through enactment, through legislatures. We have, at last, got to a point where we can take a final stand and that is the idea of Bhoodan and Sampattidan. Here is an opportunity for everyone to take some part if he is willing to leave his property rights fully, or, if he cannot do that, partly. Thus, revolutionary ideas spread through the country.

There is a great difference between violent revolution and non-violent revolution. The latter is entirely dependent upon mobilising the sanction of the enlightened masses. In a scheme of non-violent revolution, the greatest emphasis is upon changing the views of the people and their methods of behaviour in society. In a violent revolution, it



Vinoba Bhave and Mahatma Gandhi

is the power of the State, with all its vast appendages, which plays a decisive role. In the Soviet Union, after the revolution, prominent landlords fled away and the peasants occupied all the land left behind. But the values of human society did not change essentially. The question remained one of "my" property and "your" property. So, when the State took up the task of collectivising agriculture, which essentially meant renunciation of property rights by the masses of peasantry, then they had to pay a heavy price for the transformation. Nearly two crores of people had to be uprooted from their ancestral land and sent away to Siberia. What I would like to say is that a society of Sarvodaya Conception will not come by sharpening the conflict of interests.

*****

What do we see in Russia? Lenin had said that there would be no differences between the salaries of officers and labourers. Today, in the Soviet Union, the difference between the salary of the worker and that of the officer is 80 times. Lenin had said that after the revolution, the State will wither away. But today we find that the State power in Russia has assumed gigantic proportions.

The conclusion is obvious. It is not possible to achieve any success through developing the power of the State. The real method lies in developing the power of the masses and their moral strength. We have before us the slogan of Welfare State. I would like the Sarvodaya workers to fully understand the various concepts which seem to be jumbled up in this much-talked-of Welfare State. It is a slow-moving conception of changing society into a socialistic one.

But our Bhoodan movement is not merely one among the many other numerous activities. It is the *main work* today. Vinobaji was the first to get the inspiration. He has become the means for this task. Whatever it may be, I must say that revolution cannot be accomplished by working at leisure. If we want revolution we will have to work with quick speed. I therefore call upon everyone who in their heart of hearts believe in the Sarvodaya ideals to jump straight into this movement. ●

[Condensed from his speech at Puri]

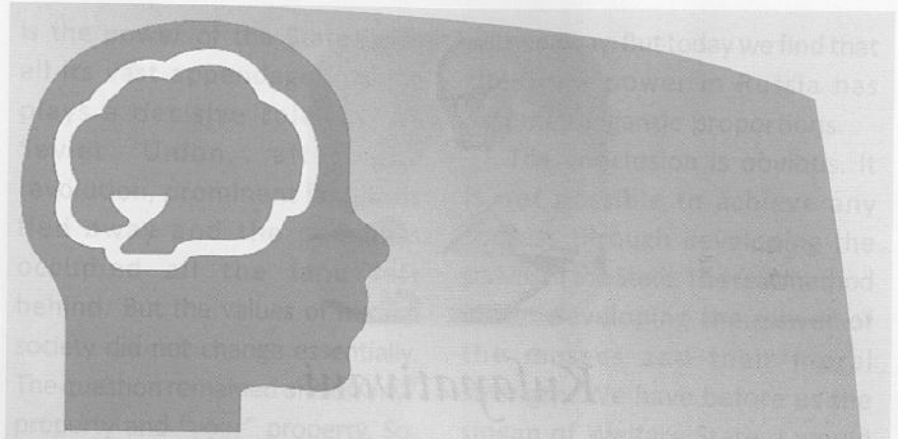
Kulapativani

The Jews

An extraordinary phenomenon occurred in the world illustrating the virility and strength of a vital culture. Before World War II, Jews lived in many countries all over the world in ghettos and in concentration camps and had for centuries been subjected to inhuman persecution and sometimes to mass murders. During World War II, sixty lakhs of them were burnt alive in Nazi camps. In spite of this savage persecution and mass massacre, they had built their life on common traditions and vivid memories of achievements of their ancestors glorified in the Old Testament.

Impelled by a collective will to action, these Jews migrated from 73 countries to Palestine. Inspired by the vivid memory of the 'Promised Land', given to them by Jehovah three thousand years ago, these men and women—barely a million—worked, suffered, fought and died to build a new Israel. They converted deserts and swamps into a land of trees and flowers and farms, and by rare heroism, developed defensive might.

This provides the most brilliant example in history of the collective will generated by common tradition and common memory of achievements, ancient though they were. ●



Point to Ponder

Existence & Living

From a conventional point of view, there is very slight difference between existence and living. Anyone who exists, lives. The person in question may be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, good or bad, but he lives anyway so long as he is alive. But from the point of view of philosophy, there are significant differences between existing and living—far greater than those between the well-dressed and the poorly-clad. A piece of cloth and a finished outfit are not the same, nor is a heap of bricks the equivalent of a dwelling.

A human being who merely exists and a human being who truly lives are two wholly different persons. Perhaps the example of a comparison or a contrast between a house and a home will illustrate the point more clearly. The house represents existence; the home, living. The roof, the walls, the floors, all the furniture, and other miscellaneous items in the dwelling are related to the house, whereas the husband, the wife and the children, their mutual respect, love and care, are related to the home.

The one who exists will be very much interested in and concerned with the various aspects of the house, such as exquisite furniture, the latest models of kitchen equipment, the finest rugs and the like. He or she may be an expert in the beautification of the yard and the perfection of the house.

The one who lives, however, is devoted to the good life of the home. He (or she) is a kind and thoughtful spouse, a loving and responsible parent. He (or she) teaches his children good manners and inculcates a real sense of responsibility in them, and also inspires in them, a love and respect for their parents.

The house signifies mere existence, however expensive it may be. But the home embodies living in the real sense, however humble it may be, and living means order, harmony, love, respect, kindness and consideration for all concerned.

Yet these seemingly simple ideas are not too well understood nor too faithfully followed. How else can one explain why so many people are so interested in perfecting their houses, but so few people are concerned with improving their homes? How else can one explain it when a husband does not mind spending money on the house but doesn't spend much time on household affairs nor casts a sympathetic glance at his busy wife or says a kind word to comfort her?

How else can one explain the paradoxical phenomenon of finding so many broken homes in so many shining houses? There can be only one valid explanation, namely the overemphasis of existence to the neglect of living.

A good life is to be found more often in a harmonious home than in an elaborate house. A good life places emphasis on good living and not merely on comfortable existence.

All creatures exist, but only human beings live. ●

Racialism

M. K. Gandhi

One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.

My scheme of life, if it draws no distinction between different religionists in India, also draws none between different races. For me, "A *man's* a *man for a' that*".

White Policy

Unseen, it ('South Africa's white man's policy') hold the seeds of a world war.

Does real superiority (of the whites) require outside props in the shape of legislation and lynch law?

Is a civilisation worth the name which requires for its existence the very doubtful prop of racial legislation and lynch law?

Nemesis

One day the black races will rise like the avenging Attila against their white oppressors, unless someone presents to them the weapon of Satyagraha.

... It will be a dark blot on the history of the white civilisation if lynch law is allowed to have its course in South Africa. I hope that the South African Government and the civilised conscience of mankind will not allow that.

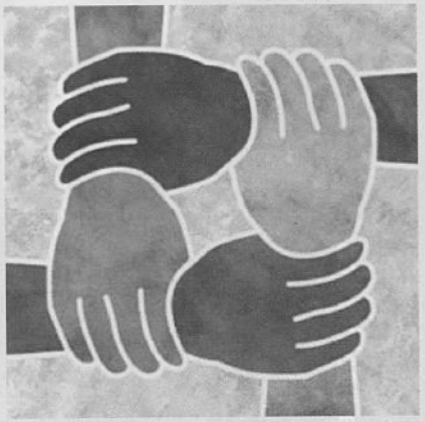
This new caste (system) is worse than the ancient but dying institution of India which has some redeeming features, even while it is dying. But the new civilised edition has none. It shamelessly proclaims that white civilisation requires the erection of legal barriers in order to protect itself against Asiatics and Africans.

'White Man's Burden'

The real 'white man's burden' is not insolently to dominate coloured or black people under the guise of protection, it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time white men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that, given equal opportunity, a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other.

..."Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." Or, do they (the whites) take in vain the name of Him who said this? Have they banished from their hearts the great coloured Asiatic who gave to the world the above message?

Do they forget that the greatest of the teachers of mankind were all Asiatics and did not possess a white face? These, if they descended on earth and went to



South Africa, will all have to live in the segregated areas and be classed as Asiatics and coloured people, unfit by law to be the equals of whites.

Removal of Racialism

Those who agree that racial inequality must be removed and yet do nothing to fight the evil are impotent. I cannot have anything to say to such people. After all, the underdogs will have to earn their own salvation... The solution is largely in India's hands. If everything is all right in India internally, she is likely to play an effective part in straightening up affairs...

If the UNO fails to deal justly with the South African Indian dispute, the UNO will lose its prestige. I have no doubt that the UNO can prosper only if it is just. ●

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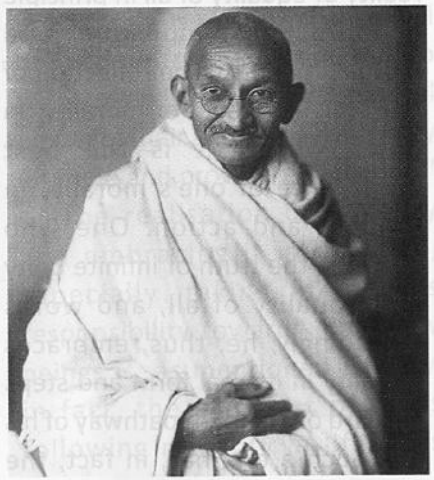
Gandhi: Moral Courage and Conviction

Dr. Ravindra Kumar

Gandhiji was a man of multi-faceted personality. Some of the facets of life of Gandhi made him not only quaint and unique among his leading contemporaries, but also established him as a person of conspicuous identity in the pages of the history of the world. He would always be remembered as a man continuously in search of the *Satya* (truth) while passing through the process of righteous acts to the maximum possible extent. He would also be known as a *Yugapurusha*—a man of the era, who had a firm belief in those supreme values, which were, and are, necessary for an appropriate conduction of the universal system (*Brahmanda Vyavastha*).



The greatness of Gandhi's life remained in the fact that he firmly believed in the truth of the universal unity or *Indivisible Whole*. The universal unity (*Brahmandiya Ekta*) is an all-timely and the perennial truth, a *Shashwat Satya*. The basic source of the universal unity is *Ishwara*, the Supreme Authority, and His ever-flowing Law, the Rule of God (*Ishwariya Niyam*), which is the Absolute. In fact, both the terms are synonymous terms according to Gandhiji. All are equally within the ambit of His Rule. To quote Gandhiji himself, "God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living law."

Firm belief in the truth of universal unity, and embracing the reality of equality of all in principle and practices, individual and mutual, is, in fact, the reflection of one's highest level of morality. In other words, it is the best observance of one's morality in thought and action. One who observes the truth of infinite unity and equality of all, and works accordingly, he, thus, embraces morality in its real form and steps forward on the right pathway of his life. Such a one has, in fact, the courage of conviction in life and he always works for the large-scale welfare of humanity and emerges as a Mahatma and also establishes himself as a *Yugapurusha*.

In this regard, Gandhi is one of the excellent examples before the whole world. He firmly embraced morality according to its basic spirit. Considering morality synonymous with truth, he placed it at the core of all his efforts for the equality of his fellow beings—whether through the mass movements he initiated for India's freedom or the revolutionary approaches he adopted for the large-scale welfare of the people.

With this in mind, we will analyse Gandhiji, taking clues from the historical events related to his life. He was a man following morality, a synonym of *Satya,* resultantly transforming the valiant Mahatma to such a *Yugapurusha* who remained firm as a rock when it came to his principles, and he fought for unity and equality throughout his life taking these as his foremost duties.

Gandhiji embraced morality, a complimentary of non-violence (*Ahimsa*), in his life according to its basic spirit. It means he made that one universal value an indivisible part of his life, which is according to its basic spirit, absolutely necessary for an appropriate conduction of the universal system. He, as a brave man, having morality in the centre of all of his activities, worked with a firm determination throughout his life for the equality and the freedom of people. His struggle for the large-scale welfare of humanity is already recorded in the pages of the history of India as well as of the world, for his efforts influenced not only his countrymen, but also the whole of humanity across the world.

His life, which was dedicated to the welfare of the common man, his lifelong fight for equality and freedom for one and all on this planet on the basis of morality, and a great legacy he left to be followed by generations to come from his continuous struggle, remained a hallmark in the history of the world. Keeping his moral bearings as the nucleus, Martin Luther King Jr. rightly said, "Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe. These principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation."

The following statement of Albert Einstein, a great scientist of the last century, should also be seen quoting Mahatma Gandhi for this very perspective, *i.e.*, his continuous struggle for equality and freedom of all with firm determination while staying within the ambit of moral values:

"Mahatma Gandhi's life achievement stands unique in the political history (of the world). He has invented a completely new and humane strategy for the liberation war of an oppressed country, and practised it with greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence he had on the consciously thinking human being of the entire civilised world will probably last much longer than it appears in our time, with its overestimation of brutal violent forces. Because lasting change will only come from statesmen who wake up and strengthen the moral power of their people by leading by example and providing education."

The realisation of equality and embracing it in practice, especially taking it as his responsibility towards his fellow beings is, as mentioned already, in fact, the acid test of one's following morality in life. It is

also the basis of his belief in the truth of universal unity ('Indivisible Whole'). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi not only accepted human equality as a divine principle, but he worked for this and three other foremost indivisibly associated aspects with it (i.e. freedom, justice and rights) throughout his life.

Those who are familiar with the public life of Gandhiji, the beginning of which could be traced in South Africa in the year 1894 when he firmly decided to oppose the Indian Franchise Bill (through which Indians were to be deprived of their right to elect the members of the Natal Legislative Assembly), they know that it was his historic step towards the restoration of equality of people, which is a natural right of everyone. The Indian Franchise Bill was a part of the racial discrimination policy of the whites (the Colonial Government back then in South Africa) considering themselves to be superiors and the others as inferiors.

The Three Pound Annual Tax imposed on every indentured Indian by the Natal Government (as a result of a proposal of the year 1894) and the Black Ordinance published in the *Transvaal Government Gazette* in 1906 (according to one of the provisions of which the registration of every Indian, female or male above eight years, was necessary) were the two other acts of the white colonials in South Africa clearly reflecting their policy of inhuman discrimination and exploitation depriving others (non-Europeans) of their natural right of equality. Gandhiji's struggle against all the three inhuman acts of the whites (the Colonials), the unprecedented success he achieved and his method of *Satyagraha*, which was a pure, ever significant and all timely weapon and its application for the first time in the history of the world could be seen in his firm commitment to the principle of human equality and continuous endeavours thereof. It should be analysed having his own statement at the centre: "My central aim is equal treatment for the whole of humanity and that equal treatment means equality of service."

Realisation of equality, it can be repeated, and embracing it in behaviours itself paves the way to human freedom, getting us justice and rights. The most important thing in a man's life is to observe equality of fellow beings—recognising equality not only in principle, but accepting it in mutual behaviours.

During his stay and struggles in South Africa, Gandhiji started some constructive work for the welfare of people, details of which are well recorded in the pages of history. All those works and more especially the concept of collective living which he transformed into reality at a farm about 30 kilometres away from Johannesburg and later in another nearby farm of 1,100 acres handed over to him by Herman Kallenbach (later known as the Tolstoy Farm) was not only a symbolic manifestation of his firm belief in the concept of human equality, but also an innovative and a worth following example of his conviction towards this end, having "tolerance, general welfare, common good and proximity". These are all necessary for a long-surviving and peaceful world.

The whole series of events related to the public life of Gandhiji after his return to India from South Africa in 1915, especially his actions, from Champaran (Bihar) in 1917 up to the independence of the country from British colonial rule in 1947 are, in fact, the story of his continuous struggles for freedom, justice and rights and eventually, human equality itself. As the history of all the Satyagraha movements under his leadership, including the three mass action movements, the Non Co-operation (1920), the Civil Disobedience (1930) and the Quit India Movement (1942) is easily available for analysis.

There were some important episodes during India's struggle for freedom in the Gandhian era, under the leadership of the Mahatma himself. In those incidents, Gandhiji's productive role, especially in settling disputes through the way of positive intervention, taking the value of labour and capital as equal on one hand and on the other, declaring the worth of life of a layman and

the ruler as the same, remained vital. However, the present generation may not be very familiar with those events. One among those episodes related to a dispute between mill-owners and mill-workers of Ahmedabad in the year 1918 on the issue of the demand for bonus by the workers. The other was related to the people's Satyagraha in the princely State of Rajkot in the year 1938-39 with a demand for a responsible, public welfare-type of rule in the State. His role in both must be seen eventually in his constant efforts or struggle towards human equality with his firm belief that "we are born equal ...the idea of inequality, of 'high and low' is evil".

Along with mass actions for the freedom of India, Gandhiji took a number of constructive initiatives with the purpose of uplifting the common man and making him self-sufficient in socio-economic fields. In this, his programmes for Swadeshi can be mentioned here in particular. These involve the revival of domestic products through indigenous industries (cottage industries); the rise of villages, all-round village services and co-operatives; and cattle protection. In the course of his work, he developed some unprecedented and significant ideas like the 'Theory of Trusteeship', a 'Non-Violent Economy' and the '*Sarvodaya* State'. All such works and ideas of Gandhiji must be analysed with respect to the above-mentioned perspective. His thoughts are, even

today, worth considering and welfaristic in the context of transforming the ideal of human equality into a reality.

Equality is a divine, eternal truth. One who is a believer of the truth of *Jagat-Ekata* (universal unity) cannot become indifferent, even for a moment, to the unfortunate reality of human inequality. The safe, peaceful and progress-oriented welfaristic future of the world remains in the cultivation of the spirit of human equality and continuous efforts thereof. The one who realises equality conscientiously and makes endeavours for it, is exalted as an enlightened soul and is revered and emulated by all generations. Such a person proves himself to be a true futurist, a visionary. Gandhiji worked throughout his life towards this end; he, thus, emerged as a Mahatma. He is recognised as Mahatma Gandhi with due respect the world over; he is accepted as a true humanist, a futurist and a visionary. ●

Bhavan's Journal

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We are happy to inform you that after updating the mailing list, the Bhavan's Chennai Kendra has already posted hard copy of this issue to all the Life Subscribers/Members and Annual Subscribers. Hereafter, the *Bhavan's Journal* hard copies will be posted to you on regular basis from Chennai itself.

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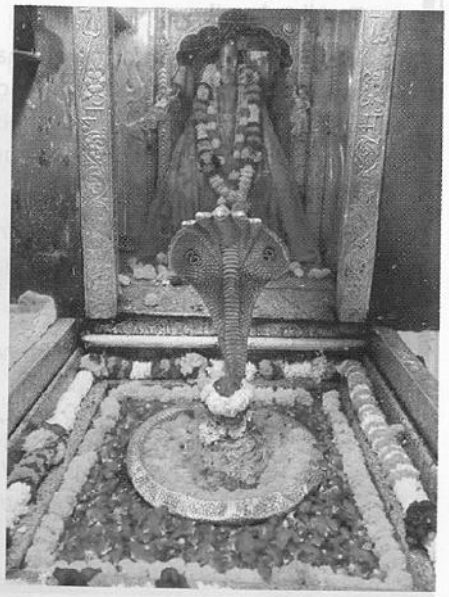
-- Editor

Omkareshwar Temple

Dr. Major Nalini Janardhanan

Omkareshwar is a temple of Lord Shiva situated on the north bank of the Narmada River near Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh, about 78 km from Indore. It is the only *Jyotirlinga* located along the north bank of a river. This *Jyotirlinga* is *swayambhu* (self-manifested). The word 'Omkar' is derived from the divine word 'Om', pronounced before every prayer. Om (P) is the 'Mool Mantra' of the four Vedas, 18 Puranas and countless *Shastras*. Here, the sacred sister rivers Narmada and Kaveri meet, separate and reunite, never parting again. This natural confluence forms an island shaped like the sacred symbol 'OM', known as Omkar Parvat. This island is called Mandhata or Shivapuri, and seen from above, it takes the shape of the word 'Om' (sacred Hindu symbol). Hence, this place got the name Omkareshwar. This temple is the only place where Lord Shiva appeared in an 'Omkara Swaroopa'. There are two temples situated on the island—Omkareshwar and Amareshwar. So here the idol of Lord Shiva is situated on both the banks of the river. The Narmada, also known as Rewa or Mekal Kanya, is the largest river in Central India and the fifth-largest in the Indian subcontinent. The river flows for 1,312 kilometres in the west direction, from its origin in Madhya Pradesh's Satpura hills to its confluence with the Arabian Sea at the Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat, passing through Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Just like the Salagrama stone from Nepal represents Lord Vishnu, the Bana Linga stones from the Narmada river represent Lord Shiva. Bana Lingas can be seen in temples all over Omkareshwar and wherever the Narmada river flows.



This temple is built in the Nagara style of architecture with elaborate and intricate carvings. It is a five-storey structure where Lord Omkareshwar is present in different forms.

- Ground or First Floor: Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga
- Second Floor: Mahakaleshwar
- Third Floor: Siddhanath
- Fourth Floor: Kedareshwar
- Fifth Floor: Gupteshwar, also known as Ghaneshwar Jaldhari by many devotees

The temple's courtyards and corridors are adorned with artwork that narrates stories of devotion and mysticism. The Shiva Lingam is on the ground floor of the temple, and it is immersed in water. It receives a daily *abhishekam* that is made of milk, curd and water from the Narmada river, and this happens three times a day. Like the Bhasma Aarti of Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga in Ujjain, the Shayan Aarti of Omkareshwar temple is world-famous. It is believed that after traversing the three worlds daily, Lord Shiva rests here. Therefore, special sleeping arrangements, rituals, and *Shayan Darshan* of Shiva are arranged here. Right behind the *Linga* is a silver image of Goddess Parvati. In front of that, a bed is laid out for Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati and alongside it, a *chaupar* for them to play *chausar* before sleeping. It is said that every morning, *chausar* and dice are found scattered in such a way, as if someone has played it during the night!

Omkareshwar Aarti

There is a short Narmada *parikrama* path of 7 km, adorned with ancient temples, ashrams, lush greenery, red-faced monkeys, and inscriptions of Gita shlokas along the way. According to the temple priests, if you do a *parikrama* (circumambulation) of the temple, it will lead you to a good life and moksha (salvation) after death. The *parikrama* of this divine land, called Omkareshwar Parikrama, symbolises the journey to become closer to Lord Shiva. There is a larger Narmada Parikrama undertaken by many sadhus which is over 2700 km and takes several months.

Narmada Jayanthi or Narmada Janmotsav is like the Chhath Puja celebrated for the river Ganga. It usually occurs in the month of Magh. It is celebrated with great variety and splendour. Special pujas are offered to the Narmada river along with the *Maha Aarthi* and in the evenings, lamps are lit across all the bathing ghats of the river. It is also accompanied by fireworks and the distribution of food to the poor.

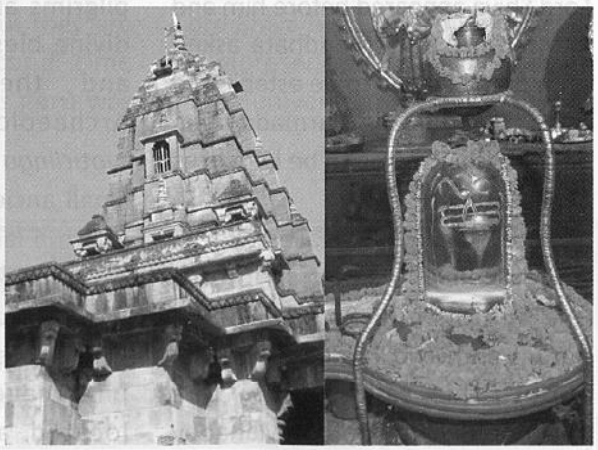
Omkareshwar city is divided into three 'Puris'

- Brahmapuri: There is a temple of Lord Brahma on the southern bank of Narmada.
- Vishnupuri: There is a temple of Lord Vishnu.
- Shivpuri: There is a temple of Lord Omkareshwar here.

Legends associated with the Omkareshwar Temple

According to one legend, Narada (son of Brahma) visited Vindhya *parvat*. When he stated that the Meru *parvat* was larger, Vindhya *parvat* was jealous. Then, Vindhya began praying to Lord Shiva to bless him and make him taller. Shiva granted Vindhya his boon that he would never stop growing but in return took a promise that Vindhya should not cause any problems for the people. But Vindhya dishonoured his promise. The Vindhya mountains were growing taller and were challenging the Himalayas, which were considered the highest mountains on earth. This growth of Vindhya threatened to block the path of the sun, causing darkness on earth. All deities approached Sage Agastya for help. Agastya, a devotee of Lord Shiva, travelled to the Vindhya mountains and asked them to bow down in reverence to Lord Shiva. The Vindhya mountains obeyed the sage's request and bowed down, stopping their growth. Sage Agastya and his wife made Vindhya promise that he would not grow until they returned. Vindhya agreed. The Sage and his wife left the place and stayed in Srisailam. According to the Puranas, the Vindhya Mountain performed penance and worshipped Shiva in the form of a physical lingam. Shiva appeared and blessed the mountain, manifesting as the 'Pranav Lingam'. It is also said that after the prayers of the gods, the lingam was divided into two parts: one became Omkareshwar and the other, Mamleshwar. The *Jyotirlinga* is located at Omkareshwar, while the physical lingam is at Mamleshwar or Amreshwar. While Mamleshwar was an earthly linga, Omkareshwar was a *Jyotir Linga* (column of light).

Another legend is that Narmada River was deeply in love with Lord Shiva and wanted to be close to him. Narmada performed severe penance. Touched by her devotion, Shiva granted her the boon that he would reside in the form of a *Jyotirlinga* on an island in the Narmada river. This island, which later came to be known as



Omkareshwar – Jyotirlinga

Omkareshwar, is considered a manifestation of Lord Shiva's divine presence.

Another legend is that of King Mandhata from the Ikshvaku dynasty, an ancestor in the 39th generation of Lord Ram. According to Hindu mythology, King Mandhata was a righteous and pious ruler who performed intense penance to seek the blessings of Lord Shiva. Pleased with his devotion, Lord Shiva appeared before him and granted his wish. Mandhata asked for a divine lingam to be established on an island in the Narmada river, and this island came to be known as Omkareshwar.

The glory of Omkareshwar is mentioned in ancient scriptures like the Skanda Purana, Shiva Purana and Vayu Purana. The belief about this miraculous and mysterious *Jyotirlinga* of Mahadev is that all the pilgrimages of a person are considered incomplete without offering water to the *Shivlinga* of this temple. It is believed that whoever worships Omkareshwar with an unshakeable faith in Mahadev will attain relief from all the evils present on earth. Many Hindu saints believe that worshipping the Omkareswar *Jyotirlinga* is equal to worshipping the Panch Kedars. The holy scriptures present in the temple indicate that the Omkareswar temple existed since at least 5,500 years ago. During their period of exile (*agyatvas*), the Pandavas spent time on this holy mountain, constructing several temples, many of which still stand today. These ancient temples bear witness to the rich history and sanctity of Omkar Parvat, drawing pilgrims and devotees who seek divine blessings from Lord Shiva and the resident deities. Archaeologists claim that the *Jyotirlinga* was originally inside a small ancient temple surrounding which a larger complex was built. In the 19th century, Holkar rulers (mainly Rani Ahalya Bai Holkar) rebuilt the temple. A total of six pilgrimages and 68 shrines are located around Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga. Lord Shiva is seated here with His family and 33 crore gods, making it a must-visit place for devotees.

There is a cave below the Omkareshwar temple (Shri Govinda Bhagavatpada cave) in which there is an image of Sri Adi Shankaracharya because it is the place where he saw his guru, Sri Govindha Padacharya. When Shankaracharya took up monastic life and set out in search of a qualified guru, he met Sri Govindhapada here. Shankaracharya was travelling from Kerala to Omkareshwar by foot. Sri Govindhapada was staying in a cave in Omkareshwar, close to the river. Once he met this Guru, he composed a mystic hymn called *Atma Shatakam* or *Nirvana Shatakam*, meaning 'six verses of the eternal soul'. The cave had secret passages to the Narmada river but they are closed now. The second time Shankaracharya met his guru was when the river Narmada was in flood and his guru was in deep meditation, unaware of himself. Sri Shankara then prayed to Narmada and the flood subsided. This incident is depicted in one of the sculptures in the cave.

"Kaaverikaa Narmadyoh Pavitra Samaagame, Sajjan Taaranaaye|
Sadaiva Mandhaatrapure Vasantam, Omkaarmeesham Shivayekameede ||"

(At the sacred confluence of the Kaveri and Narmada rivers, Bhagwan Omkareshwar, who is self-manifested, resides eternally in the city of Mandhata, also known as Shivpuri, and is the *Jyotirlinga*.)

This verse is composed by Adi Shankaracharya.

'Om' is the Mool Mantra which represents the essence of creation and existence, and is considered Lord Shiva himself, symbolising His omnipresence and eternal nature in the universe.

SWEET THOUGHT

Sri Krishna Sweets

PRODUCERS OF PURE GHEE SWEETS

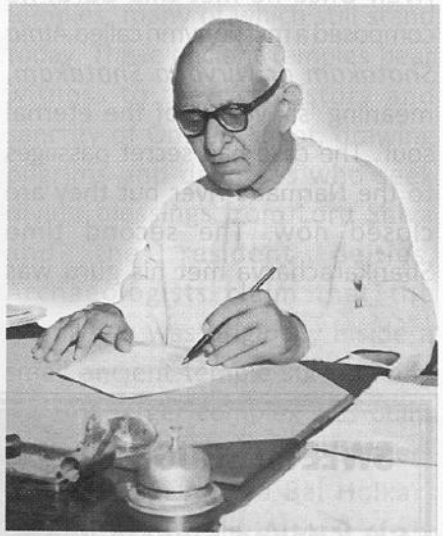
" Silence is the best answer to anger"

- *Mahatma Gandhi*

K.M. Munshi's View of Hinduism

D. Romikuttan

Hinduism is more than just a religion with distinct dogmas and rituals. It is, fundamentally, a way of life, deeply rooted in the values expressed in the ancient scriptures, primarily the Vedas. These values, passed down through generations, form the very core of Hindu belief, which has evolved over time to incorporate various other philosophical and cultural aspects. Dr. K. M. Munshi offered an insightful exploration of Hinduism's essential principles and the identity of the people who follow it.



1. The Core Values of Hinduism

Hinduism is built upon a foundation of eternal values that guide individuals towards a life of purpose, harmony and enlightenment. Rooted in the pursuit of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (prosperity), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation), it offers a holistic framework for living a balanced and meaningful life. Munshi explained that Hinduism, shaped by the wisdom of the Vedas, upholds eight core values, which are as follows:

First: Cosmic Order

The first of the core values in Hinduism is *Rita* (or the Cosmic Order), an inherent and unchangeable law that governs the entire universe. It is the principle that ensures harmony and balance in the world. Over time, this concept evolved into *Dharma*, a term that encompasses not only the cosmic law but also the duties and responsibilities of individuals within the universe. *Dharma* provides the ethical and moral framework by which humans live, ensuring the preservation of order and righteousness in the world.

Second: The One Supreme Reality

Despite the diversity of gods worshipped in Hinduism, such as Surya (the Sun God), Agni (the God of Fire), Indra (the God of Rain), and Varuna (the God of Sky and Waters), all of these deities are seen as manifestations of a single Supreme Reality, often referred to as *Brahman*. This philosophy reflects the universal belief in a unified divine essence behind all forms of worship.

Third: The Pursuit of Truth

The third core value is *Satya*, or Truth. Living in balance with the universe brings us closer to the truth. In Hinduism, truth is seen as a divine quality, and only by following *Satya* can a person find true success and happiness. The search for truth leads to lasting achievements because it is the path that brings both inner peace and outer success.

Fourth: Discipline & Purification

The fourth value, *Tapas*, refers to rigorous discipline and self-purification. It is through *Tapas* that an individual strengthens the body, the mind and the senses, refining oneself to live in accordance with the truth. The practice of *Tapas* is considered essential for those who seek spiritual growth, as it involves the cultivation of inner strength, self-control, and mastery over the physical and mental realms.

Fifth: The Eternal Soul

A key idea in Hinduism is that the soul (*Atman*) is eternal and can never be destroyed. The soul is a

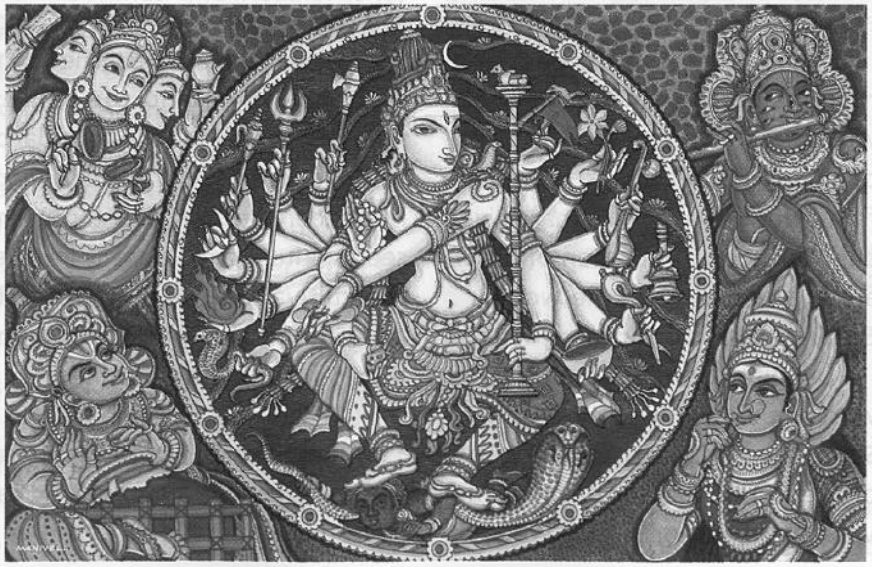
part of the Supreme Reality (*Brahman*) and will always exist. This belief in the soul's immortality helps people find comfort and meaning in life's changes. The soul's journey continues through cycles of birth, death and rebirth, always moving towards a final reunion with the divine.

Sixth: The Moral Law

One of the fundamental values of Hinduism is the moral law that governs human life as part of the Cosmic Order. It teaches that our actions and choices shape our destiny. When a person embraces truth then his or her success becomes lasting. Practising non-violence attracts love and compassion. Overcoming greed leads to abundance, while mastering desires, especially sexual urges, results in strength and vitality. Cultivating detachment from material possessions helps one discover one's true purpose in life. This wisdom guides individuals towards a balanced, meaningful and fulfilling existence.

Seventh: The Moral Causation

The seventh fundamental law of Hinduism states that moral causation is not limited to a single lifetime but extends across multiple births. This principle, known as Karma, emphasises that an individual's actions—both good and bad—determine his or her future experiences. The consequences of one's deeds in the present life influence not only one's current existence but also shape one's destiny in succeeding births. This continuous cycle of cause and effect underscores the concept of reincarnation, reinforcing the belief that righteous actions lead to favourable outcomes, while negative actions result in challenges and suffering.



Eighth: The Divine Avatar

Hinduism teaches that whenever there is too much wrongdoing and chaos in the world, the Supreme Reality takes human form as an avatar to bring things back into balance. The most well-known of these divine incarnations are Lord Vishnu's avatars, such as Krishna and Rama. These avatars appear to teach people about faith, self-discipline, and devotion, guiding them towards a virtuous life and a connection with the divine.

2. Hinduism as Sanatana Dharma

The term 'Hinduism' became common during British rule, but Dr. K.M. Munshi explained that the true name of the religion is 'Sanatana Dharma', meaning 'eternal law', or Arya Dharma. It is a universal faith that goes beyond time, culture, and geography, with teachings that can be found around the world and have influenced many other religions and philosophies. For example, Buddhism is seen as an evolution of Sanatana Dharma, offering a new interpretation of its core values and ideas.

3. The Origin and Evolution of the Word 'Hindu'

The term 'Hindu' was not originally used by the followers of this religion. It was first introduced by Turkic and Afghan invaders to describe the people of India. The origin of the word is intriguing. In ancient times, the river now known as the Indus was called Sindhu. When Persian conquerors annexed the Sindhu Valley into their empire, they pronounced the word 'Sindhu' as 'Hindu'. The Greeks later adapted this into the term 'Indoi,' which eventually evolved into the name 'India.'

Historically, India was known as Bharat and was divided into two main regions—*Uttar Patra* (North) and *Dakshin Patra* (South). The word 'Hindu' does not appear in ancient scriptures such as the Puranas. Instead, the land was referred to as Aryavarta or Bharat.

In the 9th century, Medhatithi, a renowned law-giver and

commentator on the Manusmriti, stated that any land conquered by an Aryan king and purified for sacred rituals could be considered part of Aryavarta.

4. Hinduism's Eternal Nature & Inclusivity

Dr. K.M. Munshi believed that Hinduism is an eternal faith with no single founder. One of the remarkable features of Hinduism is its inclusivity. A Hindu recognises all forms of worship as valid, as long as the devotion behind them remains pure and sincere.

Hinduism's flexibility allows for a diverse range of beliefs, practices, and philosophical interpretations. Its core emphasis being on *Dharma*, *Karma*, and the pursuit of truth, it offers a universal framework for understanding the human experience and the divine.

Dr. K.M. Munshi's insights into Hinduism provide a profound and thoughtful perspective on this ancient spiritual tradition. More than just a religion, Hinduism is a way of life shaped by deep philosophical values and a history that transcends labels and borders. As 'Sanatana Dharma', it remains a universal faith—one that embraces diverse paths of devotion while upholding eternal principles that guide humanity towards peace, fulfilment and spiritual awakening. ●

The Evergreen Singer

V. Ramkumar Menon

Mukesh was an unparalleled gentleman and an evergreen singer who defied time and boundaries, and also sang the entire *Tulsi Ramayana (Ram Charit Manas)*.

Mukesh was a Bollywood film singer, one of the best in the history of the Indian film industry. He sang about 1,300 songs in Hindi and various other languages. He believed in quality, not quantity. That was the reason he sang fewer songs compared to some of his contemporaries. But being choosy, he had a 100 per cent record of hit songs to his credit.

He sang mainly for the 'Showman' Raj Kapoor and for Manoj Kumar, although he did sing for other actors, too. He sang all types of songs—melancholic

songs, romantic songs, patriotic songs, devotional songs, songs with some moral lessons in them.

He sang the *Tulsi Ramayana*, in multiple volumes of cassettes/ CDs and that was the pinnacle of his glory.

He received the National Award for his song '*Kai Baar Yuhi Dekha Hai*' and the Filmfare Award four times for the songs '*Sab Kuch Seekha Humne Na Seekhi Hoshiyari*', '*Sabse Bada Naadaan Wohi Hai*', '*Jai Bolo Be-imaan Ki*' and '*Kabhi Kabhi Mere Dil Mein*'.

Even today, Mukesh has a huge fan base throughout the world. His songs like '*Awara Hoon*', '*Mera Joota Hai Japani*' and '*Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Pe*' are sensational and internationally popular.

He was a great gentleman, too. He helped many poor and needy people. Some people believed that Mukesh's sweet voice had a divine power. As per an anecdote, an ailing child became well again on hearing his favourite song, *Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Pe*'.

The singer was born on July 22, 1923, in New Delhi as the sixth child of Mr. Zorawar Chand Mathur, an engineer, and Chandrani Mathur. He was given a chance to sing for Motilal in the film *Pehli Nazar* by

Raj Kapoor and Mukesh

music director Anil Biswas with the song '*Dil Jalta Hai Toh Jalne De*'. After that, he never looked back and a true playback singer was born.

He married a rich Gujarati lady named Sarla Trivedi and they looked after each other for more than 30 years until his death parted them. Mukesh died during his concert tour of USA at Detroit, Michigan, on August 27, 1976, due to a heart attack. This was an irreparable loss not only for his family, but for the entire nation and for all his fans worldwide. Mukesh's songs and other renditions like the *Ram Charit Manas*, however, will continue to live forever. ●

An Adivasi Way of life

Shyamala Mani Iyer

There is always some story or other about Maoists—either an ambush or an encounter—daily in the news. So, when making a trip to Umarkot (also called Umerkote) in Nabarangpur district of Odisha, we were a bit apprehensive.

Umarkot is on the *Chhattisgarh* side of Odisha and the only way to reach there was via Raipur. It was to be a five-hour ride by car to Umarkot from Raipur airport via Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh (also known as the rice belt area of the state) and then through pristine forest area, where the Maoist hideouts were. But, as we passed along the lush green paddy fields, it was hard to believe that so much violence could exist in such a peaceful atmosphere. As we whizzed past the fields lush with paddy, the workers in the fields looked up at us curiously. Some even waved at us. Could this really be Maoist territory!

Umarkot is a serene and calm township. Several things caught our attention here. Firstly, this side of Odisha is agriculturally very rich. Verdant fields of paddy and maize stretched as far as the eye could see. There were little streams and ponds everywhere. Walking seemed to be the principle way of commuting here. We could see men, women and even children walking, sometimes with loads on their heads. There was no sign of any

stress about reaching destinations on time! Thirdly, we found that it was an Adivasi-dominated region. We saw Adivasi men moving livestock along the roads and Adivasi women in their tribal attire carrying forest produce. Naturally, all this was surprising. Was this really Maoist territory, where there was so much apparent prosperity and people were moving about peacefully?

Nabarangpur is 70 per cent Adivasi-populated. Most of them had no access to quality education and even less awareness of the world around them. Some had small holdings of their own, but they did not have the education or knowledge on how to make a decent livelihood from these holdings. So, most of them lived in poverty. We stopped at a small Adivasi hamlet. The family lived in a small mud house but the beautiful tribal drawings on the walls embellished the plain mud walls. They had a small field where they grew paddy and maize which gave them their food; they kept livestock whose milk they used and sold. The father repaired farm implements in a very traditional workshop in the compound. A hand-driven wheel, rather like a cycle wheel, lit the small wood fire, over which he repaired tools and implements. The two sons did not go to school because there was no money. Besides, they were required to help in the field and look after the livestock. They did not look as if they were unhappy with their lives and they did not seem to have any aspirations for the future.

Education did not seem so very important among the Adivasis. The difference between the privately-run school and the tribal school were apparent. We went to a small school run by a private organisation.

The school comprised of a set of buildings in a tree-filled compound, where children moved from one building to another for change of class. The medium of education was Odia. There were beautiful charts on the walls obviously prepared by dedicated teachers. The rhymes learnt were in Odia and the teachers taught them through song and dance. The education was rooted in local tradition and culture. The older students sang some beautiful Odia songs for us. But when we visited a government school where tribal children attended, it was a different story. Attendance was poor and upon inquiry, we were told that it was the rainy season, so children could not come from the tribal hamlets located in the hills. Also, attendance fell during the farming season or when they had to pick produce like *tendu* (Indian ebony) leaves from the forest. The teachers had to individually go to the tribal hamlets to persuade the parents to send their children to school. The teachers' dedication was apparent as they tried to teach these underprivileged children who had come in shabby uniforms, some without proper notebooks or school bags. The same rhymes and lessons were taught here but the feel was totally different.

Livelihood was another issue here. The main source of livelihood for the tribals was apparently the fields and the forests. During the agricultural season they worked in the fields and during the season, when forest produce could be accessed, they went into the forests. A small cashew factory in the midst of the fields came as a surprise. As the owner of the cashew factory explained about the various steps in producing this priced product, we were amazed that so much went into the production of cashew. We were surprised to see that there were not many workers that day. Many of them were tribals who could not come down from their hillside homes due to the rains.

Recently, a small sports centre had been opened by some local Samaritans with private and government funding. It was a beautifully equipped centre where local boys and girls could come and practise. The enthusiasm of the boys and girls who came there to practise was awesome. Most of them came from rural backgrounds where daily existence itself was a struggle and education was a luxury. Yet they came to play their favourite sport, just out of sheer

passion for it. Twelve-year old Manjita Kalarat was one such child. The daughter of an agricultural worker who was not in a position to support her to pursue sports as a profession, this Std. 6 student, who goes to a village school, was a successful weightlifter. Apart from winning several tournaments at the district and state level, she won a bronze medal at the State level tournament in Odisha.

This sojourn into a tribal region taught us several things. One, that all the things we take for granted in our big city lives—the luxurious apartments, the transport facilities and the amenities we expected, were all a premium here. The mud houses these tribals lived in was their home. They walked everywhere, often carrying loads. The education they had access to was minimal and often not affordable because of livelihood issues. Employment was often seasonal and not at all rewarding. Yet they were happy and at peace with the world! ●

SWEET THOUGHT

Sri Krishna Sweets

PRODUCERS OF PURE GHEE SWEETS

" Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding"

- Mahatma Gandhi

Algae, an Efficient Biofuel

K. S. Someswara

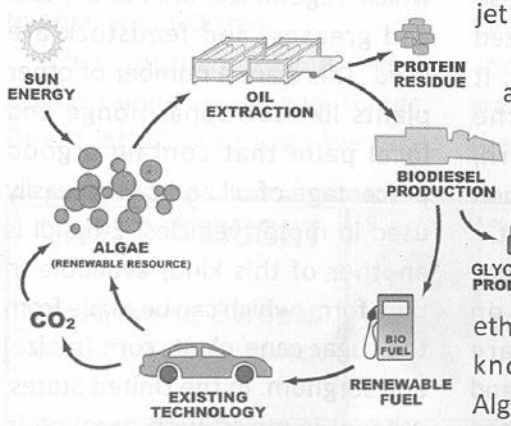
Petroleum products, especially petrol and diesel, are becoming dearer and rarer when we consider depletion of this fossil fuel in nature as well as the demand for the same. These are extensively used in motorized vehicles and certain machines. It is a major contributor to the greenhouse effect and, in turn, global warming with more carbon footprint left in the environment.

Researchers world over are endeavouring to work on alternative fuels which are efficient, environment-friendly and recyclable in nature. These alternative fuels can be used by mixing the same with gasoline (petrol) without any alteration to the engine of the motor vehicle.

Biodiesel is one among many in which vegetables, animal oil, fats and greases, and feedstock are used. There are a number of other plants like Jatropha, Honge and local palm that contain a good percentage of oil and can be easily used in motor vehicles. Ethanol is another of this kind, available in pure form, which can be made from the sugar cane plant, corn (maize) and sorghum. In the United States, ethanol is mixed with gasoline in

different proportions (10 to 85 per cent). Even in India, some buses are using ethanol and honge oil mixed with diesel. Cellulosic ethanol, or lignocellulose as it is called, refers to plant dry matter (biomass) comprising dried corn stalks and leaves, switch grass, wood chips, etc. In this, switch grass is a major biomass, on which extensive studies are being undertaken. If successful, this can lead the way to produce valuable biofuel without using food crops or land developed for food production.

Algae oil is another biofuel which is also being keenly studied. This is considered a perfect green fuel source. One should note that here, micro algae is used for the purpose (as this contains a high amount of required fat oils called triacylglycerols) and not the ordinary seaweed which is a macro algae. This is also popularly called 'oilgae' and it will be an ideal replacement for petrodiesel, without any change being effected to the engine. Unlike other food crops like corn which require a lot of water, fertiliser and land to grow, this needs very little space and only uses clean sea water. This is one of the primitive plant species and has a simple structure which allows easier conversion into biodiesel, leaving a very small carbon footprint. The primary global warming gas, carbon dioxide (CO_2) nourishes the algae. Further, this product gives a very high energy yield when compared to most other biodiesels. The productivity of algae is about 0.5 barrels/hectare per day, whereas other substances like soya, jatropha, etc., are hardly comparable with algae. More research is on to develop algae for jet fuels too.



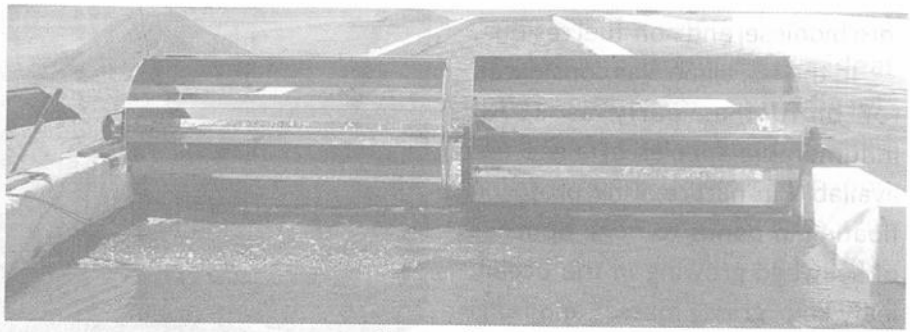
Algae cultivated and harvested are squeezed out to obtain oil. The residual can be used as animal feed or for other high-value products. To make biodiesel, the algae oil is treated with sodium ethanoate and ethanol in a process known as 'transesterification'. Algae lipids so formed are formed into biodiesel and non-fuel residue.

In the US, algae was considered for biofuel as early as 1978. Innumerable species of algae are available in nature. Tiny protozoa floating in ponds to huge bunches of seaweed growing in the ocean, leafy kelp, grassy masses and fungi growing on rocks are also part of this species. They are red, brown or green in colour. They can be easily grown and can be manipulated to produce high yields without disturbing any natural habitats or food stocks. All that is needed is water, sunlight and carbon dioxide, all of which are available in abundance in nature.

Algae that cover the surface of ponds are said to be best suited for making biodiesel. During the process, algae consumes CO_2. In other words, through photosynthesis, algae draw CO_2 from the air and replace the same with oxygen (O_2). It is this very property that makes this biofuel much sought-after by manufacturers and environmentalists. According to one estimate, 100,000 gallons of algae oil per acre can be produced without disturbing the growth of feedstock. Many experts say that we need over 140 billion gallons of algae biodiesel to replace the

petro-based products every year. To reach this goal, only about 100 million acres of land is required. The algae can be grown both outdoors and indoors.

The process of extracting the oil is as simple as that of squeezing an orange. The simplest and most popular method is using oil press, thanks to which, up to 75 per cent of oil can be extracted. In a two-part process, the press squeezes the oil. The leftover algae is mixed with hexane and cleaned so that there is no chemical left over. Another method is the 'supercritical fluid method'. Here CO_2 acts as a supercritical fluid. When a substance is pressurised and heated, its composition changes into liquid and gas. At this point, CO_2 is mixed with algae, and the latter is completely converted into oil. Once the oil is extracted, it is refined using fatty acid chains—this process is called



Algae cultivation

transesterification. Here, a catalyst like sodium hydroxide (NaOH) is mixed with alcohol (methanol). This makes a biodiesel fuel combined with a glycerol. The mixture is then refined to remove the glycerol. The final product is algae biodiesel fuel. In this process, almost 100 per cent of the oil can be extracted.

Thus, micro algae, an ordinary naturally available substance, can be converted into an extensively high-grade biodiesel which reduces the impact of global warming in the environment by consuming CO_2 and releasing oxygen (O_2) into the atmosphere. However, more studies may be needed to know the negative effects of its releasing more oxygen into the air. The residual algae are also useful for cattle feed. This can effectively replace the petro fuel and also be the best alternative in comparison with various other biofuels, where food stocks are used for the same. One should also study the cost-effectiveness of obtaining this fuel. In our country, we hardly hear much about research activities in developing alternative fuels, other than petro products. If we can succeed in making a biofuel using algae, it would definitely reduce the burden of imports of crude oil, which are controlled by a group of nations. ●

SWEET THOUGHT

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"The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace"

- Mahatma Gandhi

Emotions and Lifestyle

Understanding the Connection

Prema Raghavan

Our emotions play a significant role in shaping our lifestyle. The way we feel about ourselves, others, and the world around us influences our choices, behaviours, and relationships.

Emotions can either empower or undermine our lifestyle. Positive emotions can motivate us to make healthier choices, pursue passions, and nurture meaningful relationships. Conversely, negative emotions can lead to unhealthy habits, strained relationships, and a sense of disconnection.

Positive Emotions & their Benefits

Positive emotions are a vital component of our emotional well-being. Let us take a look at some of them.

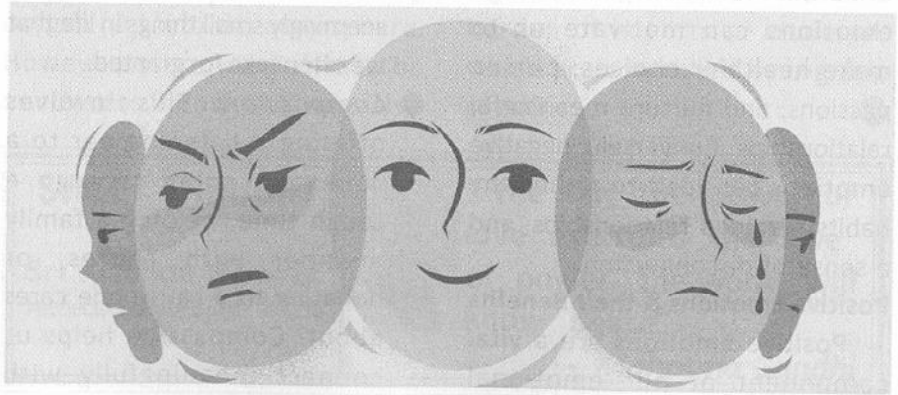
- *Gratitude*: Examples include feeling thankful for the sight of a beautiful sunrise, for a good cup of beverage in the morning, or for a supportive family/ friend. The habit of gratitude helps us to notice and appreciate even the seemingly small things in life that we often take for granted.
- *Compassion*: This involves offering a listening ear to a colleague going through a tough time, helping a family member with chores, or donating to a cause one cares about. Compassion helps us connect meaningfully with

people around us and build relationships while fostering emotional intelligence and well-being.

- *Love*: This includes sharing dinner with our family and friends, playing with our children, or enjoying quality time with close friends. Loving and cherishing the company of others gives us a feeling of belonging and connectedness.
- *Joy*: This means laughing with co-workers during a team-building activity, feeling exhilarated after a great workout, or enjoying a hobby that brings us happiness. Being joyful strengthens us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- *Forgiveness*: Letting go of a grudge against a family member, apologising to someone we wronged, or releasing negative emotions after a difficult experience, are instances of forgiveness. Forgiveness is essential to free oneself from the shackles of the past and evolve further.

Positive emotions have a profound impact on our mental and physical health, relationships, and overall quality of life.

- Improved Mental Health: Reduced stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Better Relationships: Stronger bonds, increased empathy, and conflict resolution.
- Physical Health Benefits: Lower blood pressure, healthier weight, and stronger immune system.
- Increased Resilience: Ability to cope with adversity and bounce back.
- Greater Overall Well-Being: Happiness, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose.



Negative Emotions & their Effects

While such emotions are natural, it is important to recognise, manage and transcend them in order to grow. Let us look at a few negative emotions.

- *Anger*: Whether it is frustration over a traffic jam, annoyance with colleagues who are not pulling their weight, or irritation with a recalcitrant family member, it is easy to find reasons to feel anger in our day-to-day lives.
- *Fear*: Be it anxiety about an upcoming exam, a job interview, a specific situation or its outcome, fear often inhibits us from taking good decisions and achieving our potential.
- *Sadness*: Feeling down after a break-up, grieving the loss of a loved one, or feeling melancholic on a rainy day are all examples of sadness. This emotion leads to pessimism, lethargy and stress.
- *Jealousy*: Feeling envious of a friend's success, being possessive of a romantic partner, or feeling insecure about one's own abilities, are all signs of jealousy. This emotion is an enemy that must be subdued or overcome.
- *Guilt*: Regret over a past mistake, feeling remorse for hurting someone's feelings, or beating oneself up over a perceived flaw—these are various ways of feeling and expressing guilt. While guilt can be a useful prick of conscience to help us self-correct, it is important not to let it fester.

Negative emotions can have a detrimental impact on our well-being in the following ways.

- Mental Health Issues: Increased stress, anxiety and depression.
- Strained Relationships: Conflict, mistrust and emotional distance.
- Physical Health Problems: Weakened immunity, digestive issues, cardiovascular diseases, etc.
- Decreased Resilience: A reduced ability to cope with adversity.
- Lower Overall Well-Being: Unhappiness, dissatisfaction and feelings of hopelessness.

Strategies for Managing Emotions & Lifestyle

Recognising and acknowledging our emotions is the first step to managing them. Armed with this awareness, the choices we then make in our daily lives can significantly impact our emotional well-being. Our lifestyle habits, relationships, and environment can either support or undermine our emotional health.

There are many strategies that can help us manage our emotions and lifestyle. These practices, many of which are rooted in ancient Indian traditions, foster a harmonious balance between the mind and the body. The way you start your day sets the tone for the rest of it.

◆ **Mindfulness & Meditation**

Incorporating practices like yoga and meditation into daily life improves emotional regulation and self-awareness. Ancient Indian traditions emphasize mindfulness, as reflected in the Bhagavad Gita verse: *Yogasthah kuru karmaani* (perform your duties, remaining steadfast in yoga and detached from outcomes). Scientific studies validate that regular meditation reduces stress, enhances focus, and promotes emotional resilience.

◆ **Journalling & Reflection**

Keeping a personal diary is a practice embraced by many, including Mahatma Gandhi, who used it to reflect on his actions and emotions. Writing down thoughts and feelings can help us process emotions and recognise patterns, habits and areas for improvement. For instance, maintaining a gratitude journal encourages a positive outlook and strengthens emotional well-being.

◆ **Self-Care & Self-Compassion**

Ayurveda, India's ancient system of medicine, emphasises the importance of a balanced lifestyle for well-being. Self-care practices such as following a regular sleep schedule, *sattvic* (pure) and balanced diet, regular exercise, calming rituals like *abhyanga* (oil massage) and engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation contribute to both physical and emotional health. Embracing self-compassion also helps us navigate life's challenges with kindness and patience.

◆ **Building Positive Relationships**

Surrounding ourselves with loving and supportive people fosters emotional well-being. As the Sanskrit saying goes, *Sanghe shakti kaliyuge* (in the age of strife, strength lies in community). Nurturing bonds with family and friends through regular communication, quality time, and acts of kindness creates a foundation of trust, understanding and love. Participating in communal activities like festivals or volunteer work, further strengthens these connections.

◆ **Engaging in Physical Activity**

Exercise is a proven mood enhancer, releasing endorphins that promote happiness. Practices like yoga, walking and traditional Indian dance forms like Bharata Natyam can boost both physical and emotional health. Research highlights that regular physical activity reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression, fostering a sense of accomplishment and well-being.

◆ **Limiting Negative Influences**

Recognising and limiting exposure to negative influences such as excessive social media use or toxic relationships, is crucial for emotional health. Setting boundaries and prioritising activities that align with our values can help us maintain a positive mindset.

Impact of Emotions on Lifestyle

Let us consider a few scenarios that highlight the impact of emotions on lifestyle.

◆ **Example 1: Impact of Stress**

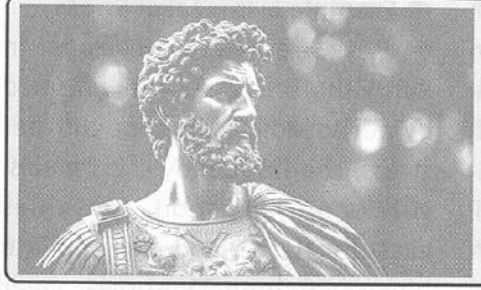
Priya, a software developer in Bengaluru, often feels overwhelmed by work deadlines. To cope with her stress, she frequently skips meals, snacks on junk food, consumes excess caffeine, and stays up late binge-watching TV shows. Over time, her health deteriorates: she experiences frequent headaches, weight gain, lethargy and insomnia. Her stress takes a toll on her physical and mental well-being.

◆ **Example 2: The Power of Gratitude**

Ramesh, a retired school teacher in Jaipur, begins his day by offering prayers and reflecting on the blessings in his life. This practice of gratitude helps him stay content and maintain strong relationships with his family and community. Thanks to his positivity, he dedicates his time teaching underprivileged children in his neighbourhood, creating a ripple effect of kindness and fulfilment. His example demonstrates how positive emotions can lead to a meaningful and rewarding lifestyle.

◆ **Example 3: Influence of Social Media**

Sneha, a college student in Delhi, spends hours scrolling through Instagram, comparing her



The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.
—Marcus Aurelius

life to the glamorous posts she sees online. This habit leaves her feeling inadequate and anxious. The constant comparison culture on social media impacts her self-esteem, her relationships, and her overall mood.

◆ **Example 4: Benefits of Engaging with Nature**

Arjun, a farmer in Kerala, finds solace in his morning routine of tending to his vegetable garden. The fresh air, chirping birds, and lush greenery provide him with a sense of peace and joy. Spending time in nature not only reduces Arjun's stress but also nurtures his connection to the earth. Modern research echoes this, showing that exposure to natural environments lowers cortisol levels and boosts positivity.

Our emotions and lifestyle are deeply interconnected. By understanding this connection and implementing strategies rooted in mindfulness, gratitude and self-care, we can lead a more balanced and fulfilling life. With small but consistent changes, we can bring about profound transformations in our emotional well-being and lifestyle. By embracing practices that nurture both mind and body, we can create a harmonious and purposeful existence, navigating life's challenges with greater ease, clarity and joy. ●

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" It is the Quality of our work which will please god and not the Quantity"

- Mahatma Gandhi

The Heart Surgeon Par Excellence

Prof. B. Venkateswaran

Dr. Kotturathu Mammen Cherian, the legendary heart surgeon, a pioneer in cardiothoracic surgery, passed away on January 26, 2025, at the age of 82 years. Always smiling and a great source of inspiration for colleagues, friends and even patients at large, Dr. KMC had always been a real medical scientist par excellence. He had a constant urge to experiment and many a time he dared to be innovative in the treatment of heart diseases, surpassing the latent fears prevalent in the minds of fellow doctors. Initially, he was experimenting with blood vessels in pigs and dogs. He even placed an extra heart in two dogs in 2017 and checked the sustaining

capabilities, and then moved on to human beings for heart transplantation techniques.

Dr. KMC, born on March 8, 1942, graduated from Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, and joined the Christian Medical College Hospital, run by dedicated Christian nuns, in Vellore, as a Lecturer in the surgery department. His subsequent exposure and experience in Australia and New Zealand as well as in the US, gave him a lot of confidence to try out new methods of diagnosis and treatment of heart diseases. Although he was very popular and well-settled in USA, he preferred to return to his motherland with a sense of patriotism and commitment.

Although he was born and brought up in a small village, in the midst of plantations viz., Mundakayam of Kottayam, Kerala, his affinity to Chennai brought him back to Southern Railway HQ, Chennai, as a Railway Hospital Doctor for a mere Rs 500 p.m. remuneration. At Chennai, he ventured to do the first ever coronary artery bypass surgery on a 39-year old Railway employee, Mr Kaja Moideen, who, after the surgery, lived a healthy life for a further 28 years. Another patient who had lost all hope—Mrs Daisy D'Costa (44)—had the Midas touch of Dr KMC on her heart, when she underwent a bypass surgery in 1976, and later led a full life and celebrated her surgical anniversary with Dr. KMC in April 2024.

Dr. KMC was highly compassionate and helpful to all his fellow doctors and sat with them to motivate them and perform heart surgeries with perfection and

Dr. K. M. Cherian Institute of Medical Sciences

without fear, seamlessly imparting the techniques in an unfailing way. He ensured that the Railway hospital was well-equipped with the latest gadgets and facilities. He was surely born to be a world-renowned cardiac specialist as was evident in his biography, *Hand of God*, wherein it is said that as a boy of 10 years of age, he dissected lizards and chameleons to look at the heartbeats with a sense of awe. Thus began his unabated curiosity of the functioning of the heart. From a young age, he pursued his insatiable interest in investigating the nuances of the most valuable part of the human body, the heart. He thoroughly enjoyed his professional vocation. He was a true disciple of his mentor Dr. M. P. Pai who encouraged him during his M.S. programme in Manipal. The remuneration KMC received for his first independent surgery was just Rs 15, given by his mentor Dr. Pai (which he refused to accept but was persuaded to). Dr. Pai also added that, "In life, never chase Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth) but Saraswathi (Goddess of wisdom), and Lakshmi will follow you. I am now giving you Saraswathi, not Lakshmi. Keep her with you."

His passion for innovation and commitment to providing the latest possible treatments in the field of cardiothoracic surgery drove him to establish world-class medical institutions in Chennai and Pondicherry. The Madras Medical Mission, the Frontier Lifeline Hospital, the Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences and a vast 370-acre medical science park stand as clear testimony to his insatiable drive and unwavering enthusiasm for building organisations of lasting value with missionary zeal. In *Hand of God*, there is an interesting anecdote which is worth quoting here for a perfect example of religious harmony. "The heart of a Hindu, Hema, was transplanted in a Muslim's body, Maimoon Beevi, by me, the Doctor—a Christian." This quote by Dr KMC was also often cited by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam in many meetings.

His own students, staff and associates revered him as a perfectionist and a tough taskmaster who would not budge or compromise when the quality of medical treatment was in question. But the same Dr KMC was a lovely friend, offering both his hands generously to keep the patients at ease. He used to counsel his staff, saying that patients not only need medicines but also need care, compassion, concern

and comfort to make them feel safe and secure while the treatment is on.

Dr KMC had his own challenges like any other man on the street. He had his own health issues, had undergone a couple of surgical procedures and one night, he woke up suddenly with chest pain and immediately rushed to his own Frontline Hospital and told the doctor colleague to plant a stent immediately, as one of his arteries was blocked. It is also interesting to discern that he was fond of hunting. His apartment at Taylor's Road, Kilpauk, Chennai, named as 'Xanadu', had a stuffed panther, a legacy of his beloved father. As far as food is concerned, he was very choosy about what he ate. He was always trim with his pressed clothes, neatly cut hair and elegantly shaven face. And he loved standing in front of the mirror, often doing touch-ups.

But alas, such a lovely human being, a person loved by all, and a committed heart specialist who gave a new lease of life to many, is no more. His life will be etched in the pages of history as a committed professional doctor and a perfectionist who had an eye for detail. ●

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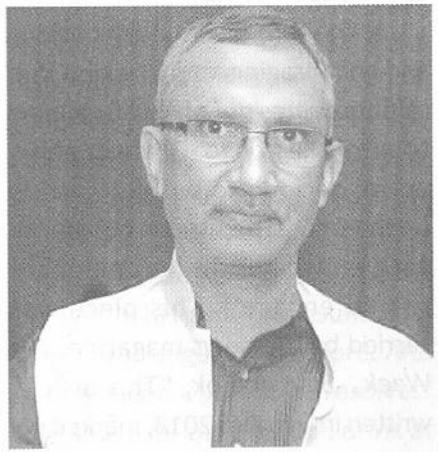
The Triumph of the Human Spirit

Nina Krishna Warrier

Ashok Warrier retired from the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) on July 31, 2018, as the Ambassador of India to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with concurrent accreditation to three other countries—the Republic of Congo (RoC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Gabon.



After his retirement, he returned to Delhi, the city in which he had grown up. Prior to retirement itself, Ashok and his wife Sunita had decided to relocate from Delhi and settle down in Aluva, Kerala. The main reason for this was that their aged parents were in Kerala; they thought it was now time to repay them for all that they had done. Aluva is well known for the scenic views centred around the Periyar River. The Shiva Temple on the

banks of the river is the main attraction of the town.

Ashok captures the sentiments of that time: "The transition from a nomadic life to a settled life overlooking the river Periyar in Aluva evoked a mix of nostalgia for the past, combined with a freshness and excitement of the kind that children experience when they visit a new place."

Foray into Writing

In 2018, a 63-year old gynaecologist from Congo, Dr. Denis Mutungere Mukwege was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with a Yazidi activist for their campaigns against the use of rape as a weapon of war.

Ashok found this story positive and encouraging, and of a kind that seldom comes out of a war-ravaged country like Congo. On an impulse, Ashok decided to write an article on the DRC ('The African behemoth with which the Indian elephant should engage'). This piece was carried by the news magazine, *The Week*. Says Ashok, "This article, written in October 2018, marked my entry into the world of writing."

Later, he contributed many more articles to *The Week*, and several newspapers like *The New Indian Express*, *Deccan Herald*, *The Hindu*, and *The Tribune* in India and the German think tank, the *Bertelsmann Stiftung* in Europe.

The Diagnosis

Apart from writing, Ashok's interest in history fuelled the travel bug in him. After his retirement, both Ashok and his wife travelled extensively in India and abroad.

In October 2023, Ashok and his wife decided to explore the medieval city of Hampi, the erstwhile capital of the glorious Vijayanagara Empire, and also the temple cities built by the Jains, the Badami and Chalukyan rulers.

Around that time, when they were in Bengaluru and getting ready for their Karnataka tour, Ashok developed a kind of sore throat which allowed him to speak only with some effort and that too with no great clarity.

Says Ashok, "So, I went to an ENT specialist who diagnosed it as laryngitis. I was prescribed some antibiotics and asked to give my vocal cords rest for a week. However, I was none the better even after our return from Karnataka. In fact my throat was so hoarse that I could barely speak."

Once more, Ashok went to an ENT specialist who did a thorough examination and found that one of his vocal cords was in a state of palsy. She prescribed further diagnostic tests to identify the root cause. A full-body PET scan revealed the presence of a large number of lymph nodes. Further tests like colonoscopy and laryngoscopy were done; but these too did not reveal anything.

As per standard protocol, a biopsy was done on the lymph nodes extracted from his left armpit. The biopsy revealed malignancy.

Ashok's oncologist decided to start his treatment rather than lose time since the other tests had not revealed any source. In medical parlance, his condition was termed as 'neoplasm of unknown origin'.

Ashok underwent eight chemotherapy sessions at three-week intervals.

Ashok says: "I did not have any significant side-effects except for some constipation that happened soon after my first two sessions. However, with the help of an Ayurvedic drug, the syrup prescribed by the oncologist (who had earlier cleared me for taking the Ayurvedic drug) and a diet comprising dates, raisins and figs, the constipation issue was taken care of."

A CT scan after four chemotherapy sessions and a full-body PET scan after eight sessions of chemotherapy, indicated significant reduction of the lymph nodes. Encouraged by these results, the oncologist then decided to put him on maintenance medication which continued till August 2024. It was then that he developed some balance issues. This necessitated an MRI of the brain. The report showed lesions in the brain.

Ashok says: "I was now required to undergo ten radiations in the head. Post radiation, the balance issues were addressed as I was now able to walk without any issues." Another full-body PET scan revealed further reduction in the lymph nodes. He was now put on a different medication which continues to this day. Three-weekly blood tests and bimonthly visits to the oncologist have become his routine.

Ashok didn't make any drastic changes in his diet. "I consume less sweets and sugar than before. And this has been a voluntary resolve. I consume a lot of fruits and drink at least two litres of water every day," says Ashok.

He adds, "I do not over-analyze my situation. I try my best to remain in the present. I have not joined any

Support Groups as these may (though not necessarily) sow seeds of doubt and confusion on the course of treatment. I continue to remain in the present, try not to allow any negative thoughts, and I keep myself busy and engaged."

The Caregiver's Story

Sunita and Ashok got married in a simple ceremony at the famous Guruvayur Temple, in the 80s. Sunita is widely travelled and articulate. She is a determined woman and a constant source of strength to Ashok.

Sunita reminisces about her first reaction on hearing about Ashok's diagnosis. "My reaction was the usual one—I burst out into tears and asked the doctor, 'What now?'."

The doctor smiled at her understandingly and said, "We have to fight... but you need to calm down first."

Sunita immediately called her children, Piyush and Pavitra (who are abroad leading their lives with their better halves). They had been anxiously waiting for the results of the diagnostic tests. Sunita says, "I think I must have sounded very helpless and weak to them. I must have cried continuously for a prolonged period of time."

She adds, "It was then that I realised I should keep my emotions under control and not burst out in front of Ashok. I realised that I have this strength in me to accept challenges because I had very smoothly crossed the first hurdle—to be calm in one of the most difficult situations. After that, my emotional breakdowns were only occasional."

Sunita says, "The role of a caregiver is never planned nor can one be prepared. One is neither a therapist nor a nurse. One is also not trained for the job; and above all, one is a family member. There is a need to accept and adapt to situations as they unfold. Yes, definitely one needs to be very systematic and disciplined because the challenges that are thrown at you require a lot of patience, time and effort. This is in addition to the household chores and work which one is already doing."

On being asked what a typical day as a caregiver looks like for her and how she balances caregiving responsibilities with her personal needs, she replies, "Every day is different, because each day comes with new challenges. One cannot plan or prepare for them. Here, I must laud Ashok: he never took any of his challenges like an impediment. I think when one accepts that the physical/ internal body requires a great deal of attention, it becomes easier to deal with."

Sunita feels that in Ashok's case, the fact that he took up writing was a great advantage. She opines, "More importantly, he took up a challenge—to write a book. He was so occupied with writing his book that the pain and inconvenience took a backseat. As a caregiver, I had to work doubly hard to look after him. Cooking fresh and simple food everyday was a challenge but I could manage it well because I enjoy cooking and it came naturally to me."

Sunita feels one needs to be organised and structured in planning the day's activities. She says, "I had my 'me' time as well. All my personal activities which I enjoy like yoga, walking, and also online reading, continued. I think it all just fell into place."

To the question, as to what was the most emotionally challenging part of the journey, and how she found ways to cope with these trials, Sunita says, "The most challenging part of this journey was, how to come to terms with Ashok's medical condition. As a couple, for years, we were committed to keeping ourselves fit and healthy—going for walks regularly, doing yoga, eating everything right and in moderation, going for yearly health check-ups. We considered ourselves reasonably healthy. To be saddled with such a situation now, in spite of following a very disciplined lifestyle, was frankly beyond my understanding. To reconcile myself to the situation was an emotional challenge."

Being of a spiritual disposition also helped her. "I also changed my focus from physical health to spiritual health. I started reading a lot of inspirational books, and listened to podcasts to raise my emotional strength. I started to engage myself into understanding and learning to chant and recite the Bhagavad Gita. I read a lot of interesting books and understood the importance of being in the present. All this helped me remain emotionally balanced."

Sunita says that her children have been her strength. She remembers the days when their daughter would methodically read to Ashok from Dr. Joe Dispenza's book *Becoming Supernatural* in the mornings (their son had gifted this book during the chemotherapy days to help him find inspiration from it).

The father-daughter team would also watch the podcast of the book for an hour or so.

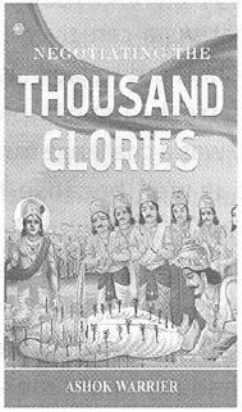
Their son, too, used to visit them regularly. But he had a different take on engaging with them. He would keep them in splits with his jokes, anecdotes, and seeing a funny side to anything and everything. This helped keep the atmosphere at home very stress-free and normal.

Silent strength and moral support came from their daughter-in-law and son in-law.

Their little grandson was like a shot of tonic; just hearing his voice would pep them up and keep their spirits high. Then again, their parents, doctors, friends, relatives ... all were there for them in different capacities.

Sunita says, "Life has been a roller coaster ride ever since [Ashok was diagnosed with cancer]. I have learnt to live in the present and keep things very simple and doable. I made a deliberate attempt not to talk about the problems Ashok was going through. I wanted to keep the atmosphere at home very relaxed and stress-free, so all phone calls were answered by me only in the evenings when I used to go for walks. Talking about a problem over and over again is not a solution. Neither will it help. Engaging one's mind with positive thoughts is the way forward. That has been my learning from this experience."

Birth of a Book



Ashok was always a voracious reader. He found that writing helped him prevent having negative thoughts and it also brought clarity to his thinking. He wrote several articles for various newspapers as well as two books while undergoing chemotherapy and radiation.

Negotiating the Thousand Glories is the title of one of his books. (The second book, which is about a different subject altogether, will be published soon.)

Here is a chat with Ashok Warrier about his book and cancer.

What inspired you to write your interpretation of the Vishnu Sahasranama after being diagnosed with cancer?

Vishnu Sahasranama was not entirely new to me. I had been chanting the Sahasranama from April 2020 onwards. I had attended an online session in 2020, spread over a year, on the subject where the correct diction was explained. We were all made to practise reciting the Sahasranama. There was also a session where the variations in the interpretations were explained.

For the last four years or so, every Sunday, my wife and I have been chanting the Sahasranama as part of a group recital.

What about the cancer diagnosis?

I was diagnosed with cancer in October 2023. The cure and treatment for this disease is protracted, expensive, and can be mentally and physically exhausting.

I realised that this was also the time to tweak certain things in my life which I had been doing for a long time. It is important to be patient, stay in the present, avoid any self-pity, and engage oneself mentally.

Dr. Joe Dispenza's book, *Becoming Supernatural* (a book gifted by my son), which my daughter would read out to me during the initial phase of the treatment, was a comforting testimony to the power of the mind. The book narrates many examples, including the author's own, of how the mind becomes paramount in fighting any medical situation.

During the eight chemotherapy sessions and radiations which followed thereafter, a thought struck me. Although I had learnt to recite and even memorise some of the shlokas, I decided that I should do my bit during this time, in getting the message and contents of the Sahasranama reached, in simple English, to readers, especially young readers. I saw in this an opportunity to widen my own knowledge of the Sahasranama while engaging myself productively.

How did your relationship with spirituality evolve after your diagnosis?

I felt that the Sahasranama and its exposition made me more patient, less reactive and more

deliberate in my thoughts and actions. Many of the things which would earlier rile me, were received and absorbed with an entirely different mindset. I started making conscious efforts to remove all forms of negativity from my life while building upon positivity. I watched self-improvement programmes and podcasts; I started doing yoga and joined online Gita chanting classes.

The Vishnu Sahasranama is a complex text. How did you approach interpreting it in a meaningful way?

The Vishnu Sahasranama, as you may be aware, is composed in Sanskrit. It was later narrated by Bhishma to King Yudhishthira, also in Sanskrit. Being constrained by not knowing Sanskrit, I had to read a large number of books on the subject (in English), watch a number of discourses by Vedic scholars, and read commentaries on the subject by scholars like Swami Chinmayananda.

A classmate of mine and his mother among others, too helped by going through my draft and reviewing it. (They were both adept at Sanskrit.) In order to make the reading and the understanding of the Sahasranama easier and more relatable, I have, in my book, narrated and quoted several anecdotes and stories from our ancient scriptures and epics.

What do you believe is the most powerful message the Vishnu Sahasranama offers its readers?

The Vishnu Sahasranama, by highlighting the supremacy and absoluteness of Lord Vishnu, brings home the stark truth and smallness of us—the mortals. When we understand how small we are in the cosmic scheme of things, it sobers and tempers us. Our egos don't matter. It does not matter how important we feel we are. The Sahasranama basically allows us to imbibe the ancient wisdom of the ages, and reflect and practise this wisdom in our own lives.

The then President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, meeting Shri Ashok Warrier, Ambassador-designate of India to the Democratic Republic of Congo, at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on November 10, 2015.

Did working on this project help you cope emotionally and mentally with your condition?

Since a lot of reading, understanding and watching tons of material was involved in writing this book in as simple a manner as possible, it kept me fully engaged and involved. When you do not have any time for thinking about extraneous things, including your own illness, you tend to be freer and more focussed.

I had also promised myself a certain timeline for getting the book published and this too helped. I did not have any personal healing experience, though Dr Dispenza's experiences, as narrated in his book, were interesting and inspiring. The emotional support and understanding I received from my wife, my children and of course from the rest of my family and friends was very comforting. My daughter had told me at the outset, "We will fight this together." That gave me a lot of strength and assurance.

What were some of the key challenges you faced during this journey, and how did you overcome them?

One major challenge which anyone in such a situation faces is fear of the disease coupled with a certain bewilderment. Questions like "Why did this happen to me?" and "What wrong have I done?" start cropping up. Some people, even if unknowingly, express sympathy, which only makes one more worried. The huge expenses and of course the physical pain and suffering during the treatment become additional matters of concern. As stated earlier, I decided right at the outset, that I shall stay in the present—that way I kept the past and the future at bay. Again, since I got involved with my book, I had no time for any other thoughts other than those pertaining to my book. How should I present it? Which illustrations should be there? Which anecdotes or stories should be in the book? These were the questions on my mind. As far as my health was concerned, I remember telling my doctor, "Do what you have to do. I will not question you about this or that as I will not be going through Google and throwing questions at you based on what I have seen on Google." In fact, I never used to Google anything, even now, about my treatment.

As I mentioned, cancer treatment can be a drain on one's financial

resources. Hence it is important to have either a system of health cover from one's organisation or a good health insurance package with a good cap and coverage. Fortunately, I had good insurance coverage and so at least that was not much of a concern.

Could you share some key lessons from your interpretation that are meaningful for those facing difficult times?

Staying in the present, chanting mantras or learning shlokas, and realising the smallness of oneself will enable one to better handle challenging situations. As far as physical health is concerned, it is important to have a lot of water, some form of physical exercise and plenty of fruits.

If faith is the compass, the ship will not swerve from its destination. The Vishnu Sahasranama provides one with an instrument of faith as well as a balm for calmness. In the complex world of today, it is so very important to be clear in one's thoughts and actions. Chanting the shlokas of Sahasranama gives one a certain feeling of calmness, which is both soothing and mentally healing.

How has this journey changed your perspective on life and mortality?

My attitude towards life has undergone a change. I have become more patient, mentally calmer, and more understanding of people and situations. Death is inevitable and not something to be afraid of. Whatever the situation, one realises that it is beyond one's control. The acceptance of this reality itself bestows more clarity to us and reduces confusion and frustration.

What message would you like readers to take away from your work, especially those going through challenging times?

Acceptance of any situation is important. Staying in the present is a must and keeping oneself busy and productive can greatly help in combating any tough situation.

I even wrote my second book, which is going to be published shortly, during my treatment. Two articles I wrote for *The Hindu* were published. These creative efforts gave me immense satisfaction. Following one's passion during adverse situations is important. This will help one forget the challenges posed by the situation.

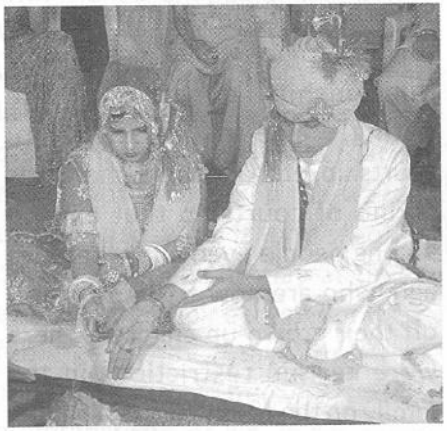
CHETANA

Marriages are made in Heaven! ..... Why make it Hell?

Rajiv Magal

There was a time, not too long ago, when marriage was considered a sacred phase of one's life. The union of a couple from two entirely different backgrounds was treated as divine ordainment, not to be disobeyed or belittled. It was considered a blessing of the super power and meant to go on and on for generations to follow, endlessly. Although the bride and the bridegroom mutually agreed to become the sacred couple, there was a strong belief that it was God Almighty who had fixed this compatible match earlier, maybe at the time of birth of the two parties. Horoscope matching was a mere routine, a ritual as a solace for the minds of both the families. It was an unquestionable solemn belief.

Of late, there is a drastic change in the situation. Marriage ceremonies are performed in different environments. The



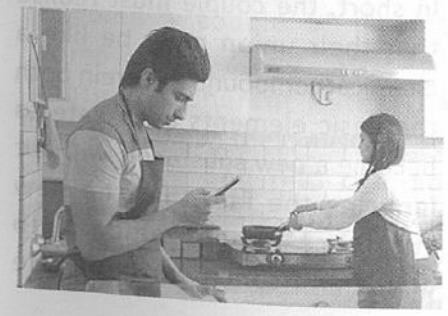
practice of parents and some of the elderly members of the family preferring to meet over the exchange of pleasantries and to know each other's families and backgrounds, is gradually becoming history, with a few exceptions here and there! Admittedly, most parents have come to a conclusion that the to-be married youngsters are mature enough to bypass the elders in their family and proceed to take a decision on their own. Possibly, their educational levels are much higher than that of their parents and not to mention, they are regarded as belonging to the most modern era of managing anything and everything without the intervention of their parents and the elders in the family.

What we see and experience today is an amazing change. Several new and contemporary terminologies have crept into relationship dynamics... like dating, live-in relationship, courtship, etc. Of course, there was a kind of courtship that existed among people even a few decades ago, who are now trying to marry off their grown-up children. There were certain restrictions in the family on the to-be married 'pair'—although, in most cases a betrothal or engagement ceremony was the first and foremost step for both the parents to commit on the alliance of the families through marriage, where the formal agreement to get the couple married was documented in a handwritten document, not as a legal commitment. This was a purely ethical and mutual understanding so as to proceed with the preparations for the once-in-a-lifetime celebration, namely the festivities!

Bond between Unknown Families...

The two families that agreed on the solemn unification were either totally unknown to each other or introduced by a third party; not a marriage broker but a well-wisher. The well-wishers invariably had basic information of both the families and their activities, based on which they prompted both the families to take a step forward and contemplate the association. Obviously, their interests were entirely different, attitude and aptitude unknown, the atmosphere and the situations in which they both grew up were different, and their blood groups may be compatible but not their DNA. That means two entirely unknown families took a step to meet each other and discuss the possibilities of wedlock! As the saying goes, "First impression is the best impression." Only if the elders in both the families found compatibility initially, did they take the next step of meeting again with the to-be married bride and groom, that too in the august presence of their respective parents and elders. In short, family elders were involved in all the activities that were associated with a plausible relationship.

Today, things have changed drastically. It has changed to such an extent that elders 'might' be involved in the decisions the couple take, only at a later stage, that too if their role is considered indispensible or inevitable. Even in the case of an arranged marriage, the parents advocate that the girl and boy meet each other at their convenient location, like a mall, park, club, coffee shop or a holiday resort and spend some time chatting—since they are considered mature enough to take a decision and define their future. There are cases where the elder members of the family are considered outmoded and their interference or even presence is considered superfluous!



Modernity, Our Perception!

All said and done, this is the modern age of *Kaliyuga*! What truly matters is the manner in which the duo entering a solemn wedlock manages life post-wedding. Nowadays both the partners are qualified, well-employed with handsome earnings—due to which, perhaps, they may not feel the necessity of other family members, at least till a few years of marriage. In the initial period of the wedlock, there is more of fun and adventure... travelling on weekends, partying with friends, shopping, and so on. When there is a change in status with anticipation of a third member in the family, there will be certain disruptions in routine activities and it mostly comes in the way of the spouse who is undergoing physical changes. It may at times even hamper their earnings or their feelings. They may find the necessity for a helping hand, preferably kith or kin, in the form

of elderly parents, oblivious of their age and physical well-being. Naturally, the addition of a new soul to the family is a celebration and parents on both sides would welcome it as God's gift and rejoice in the occasion. This is the way to progress in any family that unites and proceeds further in anticipation of pristine harmony.

Involve Elders!

However, various things are changing in this contemporary world; developments are not as savoury as one expects them to be. Small skirmishes are common in any family. But if they occur at the very beginning of wedlock, the issues tend to become serious. With both the partners employed and with dominant earning capacities, a kind of ego develops in both of them. There are many cases where there is a huge pay parity between the couple and this may lead to a sort of superiority complex among them. Even a small difference of opinion may give way to an ugly spat. Unless minor issues are sorted out by mutual understanding and acceptance, they may explode with brusque developments. More often than not, in view of low patience levels, they may indulge in arguments and verbal spats—wherein money power takes control and they may take a split-second decision and separate. They may not even inform their elderly and dependant parents, who may not be aware of the internal developments all the while, but may be dreaming of a distinct future. When the aged parents come to know that the issue has reached a point of no-return, their entry may prove to be futile or they may not even be entertained by either of them! It shatters both the families, and they would have lost an opportunity to at least make an attempt to resolve the issues. Their age makes them depressed at having to accept such a shock!

Two Different Entities Join....

What is basically desired in a successful, peaceful and mutually compatible married life? Is it mere camaraderie? Compromise? Acceptance? Maybe or maybe not! In short, the couple must realise that their union must be like a chemical compound, wherein both the basic elements assimilate to become a new substance, without ignoring the fact that the new substance cannot amount to any significance without the contribution of both basic elements. They are both indispensable and inseparable, but no single element can claim superiority to form the compound! In this sense, when the amalgamation is completed, the couple must understand that they are mutually indispensable and separation is not even a last resort!

It is important for the couple to accept and appreciate that both partners have come from entirely different family backgrounds, with different temperaments, different atmospheres of upbringing, different educational qualifications, different companies of friends, different food habits, different tastes, different hobbies, different ambitions, with very few similarities. When everything is basically different and unknown (the couple come to know of their similarities and differences only when they start living as a couple and not before), how can they become a couple of flawless compatibility and strike a mutually coherent note? That does not mean they must not see eye-to-eye and find common ground! Problems do occur in any family, between any two individuals; some are trivial while others may be grim. In every situation, at least one of the two must show magnanimity and cool down and behave maturely. It is not a contest, so there is no winning or losing here. The partners must accept that marriage is a bond that has only a commencement and no expiry date! The new additions to the family tree must ensure that the tree branches out relentlessly. Any discord in the family only affects their siblings at a later date and proves to be unaffordable, however wealthy they may be financially. There is nothing more valuable than mental peace and happiness! No amount of wealth can buy them! Always think of the future and feel for the other members of the family, without being self-centred! Once one learns to accept every situation as solvable and manageable, he is the king in making his journey a pleasure! We should strive not to give room to bitterness. Let marriages be a win-win situation, without it becoming a competition! Let us remember the saying by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, "Most marriages fail not because of lack of love, but due to lack of friendship." ●

Youngest Female Master Scuba Diver

Mia DaPonte, 12, is the youngest female to earn the title of Master Scuba Diver. It took two years of training and effort, but in February, Mia DaPonte finally reached her goal which represents a level of training that most divers—even adults—never reach.

Diving underwater is exciting, but it can be dangerous. Mia's mother is her idol. On her 10th birthday, Mia got her Open Water Diver certificate. Mia lives in Rhode Island, where the oceans are cold and visibility is less. But she didn't let that stop her.

Mia took several other courses, where she learned different skills, including first aid, how to find her way underwater, and how to identify fish.

While diving you need a buddy—a second person working as one dives. Mia's mother is her buddy. Mia has now logged 78 dives—far more than the 50 needed to become a Master Scuba Diver.

But Mia had to wait for her last two courses—Advanced Open Water Diver and Rescue Diver. Because one has to be at least 12 to get them.

In February, Mia and her family went to Mexico, where she made her first night dive. Over the next week, Mia did most of the training required for the last two courses. On her birthday, she passed the Advanced Open Water course. The next day, when she was officially 12, Mia finished the Rescue Diver course.

Mia did three dives in one day, including one deep dive down to 17.5 metres below the surface. The hardest part of the course was raising an injured adult diver to the surface and taking the steps needed to help him breathe again. Mia says she feels proud to have become a Master Scuba Diver. But she doesn't plan to stop there. She is interested in getting more training as a diver. She hopes to become a marine biologist. She is particularly interested in tagging and tracking sharks!

Controlling a Child's Phone Usage

Too much phone usage among children can negatively impact their physical health, mental well-being, and social development. Prolonged screen time can lead to issues such as poor sleep quality, obesity, eye strain, and reduced physical activity. Moreover, excessive exposure to digital content can affect attention span, cognitive development, and emotional regulation. Children who spend too much time on phones may also struggle with social interactions and experience anxiety or depression. Reducing phone usage allows children to engage in healthier activities, develop social skills, and focus on real-world learning experiences.

There are several methods of controlling phone usage. One is to set screen time limits. Establish daily screen time limits based on the child's age and needs.

Encouraging outdoor and physical activities also helps. Cycling or a simple exercise such as walking improves physical health and also stimulates creativity, problem-solving abilities and social skills.

A 'no-phone zone' at home—in the bedroom or at the dining table—helps restrict phone usage.

Encouraging children to develop hobbies like reading, painting, music, or solving puzzles can shift their attention from screens to productive activities. Hands-on activities such as arts and crafts improve motor skills and enhance creativity.

Children often imitate their parents' behaviour. If they see adults constantly using phones, they are more likely to do the same. Parents should set an example by reducing their own screen time.

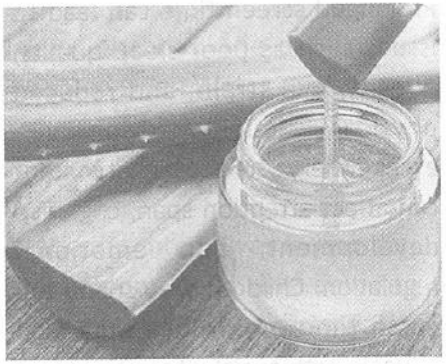
Creating a reward system where children earn privileges when they spend less time on their phones, also helps. They can earn extra playtime, a family outing, or a favourite activity.

Rather than simply restricting phone usage, explain to children

why too much screen time is harmful. When children understand the consequences, they are more likely to self-regulate their screen habits and make conscious efforts to reduce phone usage.

Home Remedies for Mosquito Bites

Mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya are common. Mosquito bites cause red bumps and itchiness. You can use different methods to prevent mosquito bites like the use of a mosquito net or mosquito repellent. To reduce the discomfort from mosquito bites, you can try some home remedies.



Ice cubes reduce itchiness. The cooling effect reduces inflammation. Aloe vera helps fight the discomfort caused by mosquito bites. Aloe vera gel has anti-inflammatory properties which have a healing effect.

Honey has anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Applying a few drops of honey on the affected area gives some relief.

Holy basil (*tulsi*) is there in every household. It contains a compound that can soothe mosquito bites. Boil fresh basil leaves in a cup of water for a few minutes; let it cool and then apply to the affected skin using a washcloth.

Using freshly-cut onion slices can be used to counter-attack mosquito bites.

(Compiled by Dr. Veena Adige)

SWEET THOUGHT

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"An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind"

- Mahatma Gandhi

NANDANA

Nature's Mysteries

The Bermuda Triangle is a very well-known mystery of the world. Many planes and ships have disappeared here and no one knows why. However, there are many other mysteries as well...

Boiling Waters of Peru

Hidden in the thick jungle of the Peruvian Amazon is a percolating, boiling river. The steaming turquoise waters reach up to 99 degrees Celsius. They are guided by ivory-coloured stones and guarded by 60-foot walls of lush forest and vegetation. Locals believed the river was sacred and that the hot waters held healing powers, and they used it for medicinal purposes.

Though the Shanay-timpishka, more popularly known as the 'Boiling River of the Amazon', is not the only thermal river in the world, it is the largest documented one.

Though the entire river is about 9-km long, it is the lower 6.24-km stretch that is thermal.

The stream flows over geologic fault-zones, where hot geothermal waters from deep in the earth, come out to the surface, turning the cold jungle stream into the imposing 'Boiling River'. The hottest temperature ever measured was a hot spring at 99.1 °C.

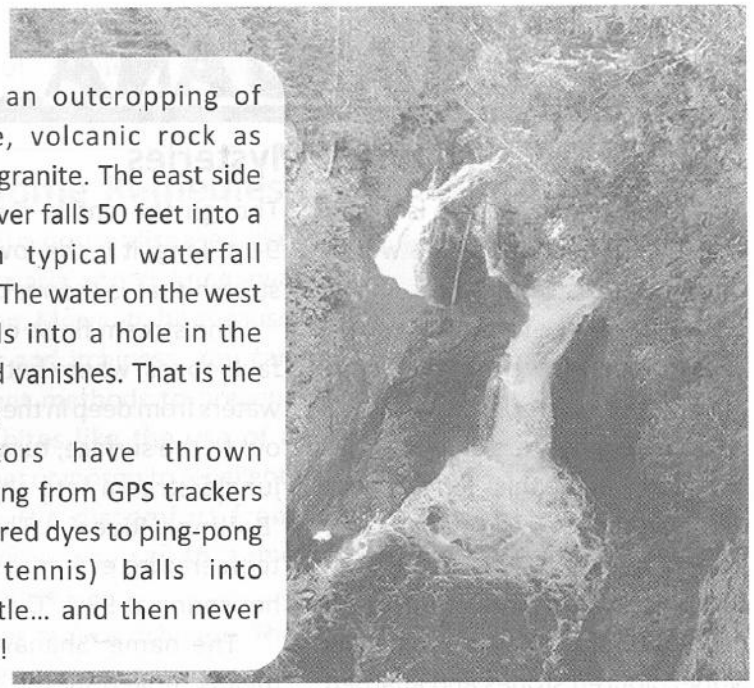
The name 'Shanay-timpishka' means 'boiled by the heat of the sun'—from 'shanay' (heat of the sun) and 'timpu' (the verb, 'to boil'), though the source of the heat is actually geothermal.

Local people believe that the boiling water was by Yacumama, a giant serpent spirit known as the 'Mother of the Waters'.

Devil's Kettle

Devil's Kettle waterfall along Minnesota's North Shore (in USA) sees the falls plunge into solid rock, then disappear and no one knows where the water goes.

The falls sit above Lake Superior, about a mile inland on the Brule River. The river splits in



two at an outcropping of rhyolite, volcanic rock as hard as granite. The east side of the river falls 50 feet into a pool in typical waterfall fashion. The water on the west side falls into a hole in the rock and vanishes. That is the mystery.

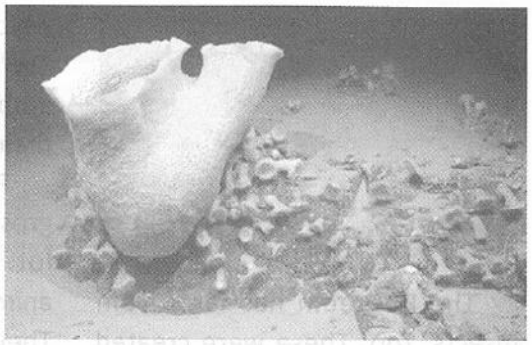
Visitors have thrown everything from GPS trackers to coloured dyes to ping-pong (table tennis) balls into the Kettle... and then never found it!

Iceberg Reveals Surprising Sea Life

In January this year, an iceberg as large as Chicago separated from an ice shelf in Antarctica. A scientific research ship was nearby. The scientists jumped at the chance to study an area of the ocean floor that had been covered by ice for thousands of years.

Icebergs are so thick that it is extremely difficult to study anything that lies beneath them. Sunlight is normally the main source of energy for life in the sea. In open oceans, important food supplies fall slowly towards the bottom, even where it's dark. But the thick ice meant that no food supplies could fall beneath it. And since the ice had blocked out the light for thousands of years, the scientists were not expecting to find much life. But they were in for a surprise.

Using the ship's remote-controlled underwater vehicle, the team explored the sea floor in the area for eight days. The scientists saw fish, squid, and giant sea spiders, as well as corals and sponges. The scientists believe that some of the species they found have never been seen before.



Scientists wonder how such a wide variety of sea life could exist in a dark, cold place. They feel that food sources may have been swept under the iceberg by ocean currents.

One interesting question is how the life in this area will change in the future. That information could become even more important as global warming leads to more melting of the ice shelves and more icebergs break free.

A Museum for Dinosaur Poop

Last May, Arizona (in USA) got a new museum that focuses on something many people find disgusting: poop. Not just any poop, but really old poop. So old, in fact, that it has turned into a fossil. The Poozeum is a collection of thousands of examples of 'coprolites'—fossils made of poop.

Since coprolites are fossils, they can be millions of years old. When animals pooped long ago, their poop sometimes got covered up by mud, sand or dirt. Over time, the poop turned to rock. These rocks are called coprolites. There is no smell or nasty germs—it's all stone!

The museum is the brainchild of George Frandsen. He has been collecting coprolites since he was 18, when he found a poo-shaped rock in a shop. He thought it was funny, gross and interesting, all at the same time, so he bought it. He now has about 8,000 of them!

The Poozeum has coprolites not just from the US, but from all over the world, including the United Kingdom, Morocco and Russia. Some are smaller than a nickel. Others are huge.

The best exhibit of the museum is the poop that holds the Guinness World Record for the largest coprolite from a carnivore (meat-eater). The coprolite is over 0.6 metres long and 15 centimetres thick. It weighs more than 9 kilograms, and is filled with chunks of bone, and is probably from a Tyrannosaurus rex.

The Poozeum has farts from insects, too. These were created when bugs got trapped in tree sap. As the bugs died, they released gas, which also got trapped in the sap. The sap turned into a fossil called amber, preserving the bugs and their farts.

Poop fossils may seem funny or gross, but they can tell scientists a lot. Coprolites show what an animal ate and how healthy it was. They can also help scientists learn about the environment at the time the poop was left.

De-extinction Project

Colossal Biosciences has created thick-haired mice that they are calling 'Colossal Woolly Mice'. The mice, created by editing DNA, are meant to be a step towards the company's larger goal of recreating the extinct woolly mammoth.

Colossal Biosciences Inc. is an American biotechnology and genetic engineering company that is focused on replacing some animals that went extinct long ago. Its main project is to recreate woolly mammoths. Colossal isn't trying to bring woolly mammoths back to life. Instead, it wants to change the DNA from Asian elephants to create an animal similar to a woolly mammoth. The company believes bringing this kind of animal back to the Arctic could help restore balance to the environment there.

DNA is a collection of information and instructions stored in a tiny chemical form. Every living thing has DNA that causes it to grow in a certain way. Small bits of DNA, called 'genes', help control different parts of how a living thing grows. For example, some genes might control eye colour. Some genes work by themselves, others work together. Some may help control more than one thing.

Colossal believes that its work could end up being helpful in many situations—including protecting endangered animals.

(Compiled by Dr. Veena Adige)

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SWADHYAYA

Valmiki Ramayana

(Uttarakanda, Canto 98)

यावत्प्रजा धरिष्यन्ति तावत्त्वं वै विभीषण ।
राक्षसेन्द्र महावीर्य लङ्कास्थः स्वं धरिष्यसि ।।२२।।

yaavatprajaa dharishyanti taavattvam vai vibheeshana
raakshasendra mahaaveerya lankaasthah svam dharishyasi.

(Ramachandra spoke to Vibhishana:) "O Vibhishana, very powerful one and king of the demons! As long as the subjects will stay alive, so long you also will remain alive (as king) at Lanka."

शासितश्च सखित्वेन कार्यं ते मम शासनम् ।
प्रजाः संरक्ष धर्मेण नोत्तरं वक्तुमर्हसि ।।२३।।

shaasitashcha sakhitvena kaaryam te mama shaasanam
prajaah samraksha dharmena nottaram vaktumarhasi

"You are commanded by me, out of friendship. Follow my orders and protect the subjects righteously. Please do not make any reply."

तमेवमुक्त्वा काकुत्स्थो हनूमन्तमथाब्रवीत् ।
जीविते कृतबुद्धिस्त्वं मा प्रतिज्ञां विलोपय ।।२४।।

tamevamuktvaa kaakutstho hanoomantamathaabraveet
jeevite kritabuddhistvam maa pratijnaam vilopaya.

After speaking thus to Vibhishana, Ramachandra, the descendent of Kakutstha, then spoke to Hanuman: "You have firmly decided to live (on this earth), so see that your promise is not broken."

मत्कथाः प्रचरिष्यन्ति यावल्लोके हरीश्वर ।
तावत्त्वं धारयन् प्राणान् प्रतिज्ञामनुपालय ।।२५।।

matkathaah pracharishyanti yaavalloke hareeshvara
taavattvam dhaarayan praanaan pratijnaamanupaalaya.

"O best among monkeys! As long as the stories related to my life circulate on this earth, so long you shall live, and follow the words of your promise."

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वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् । वेदो नित्यमधीयताम् । वेदाः वयं वः शरणं प्रपन्नाः । वेदा ये नः परं धनम् ।

Advaitha Vidyacharya Maharaja Saheb
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An Appeal For the Preservation of Vedas and Shastras
For posterity under ancient traditional Gurukula System.

The Raja Veda Kavya Patasala, Kumbakonam in Tamilnadu was established in 1542 AD for the spread of Vedas and Shastras on the southern banks of sacred river Cauvery by the illustrious statesman- Administrator **SAINT ADVAITHA VIDHYACHARYA MAHARAJA SAHEEB BHAGWAN SRI GOVINDA DEEKSHIDAR** who was the chief minister to the three successive Nayak rulers of Tanjore. This is the only Patasala in Tamilnadu, which has been functioning without interruption for the past 482 years, where all the three Vedas viz. RIG, YAJUR (SHUKLA, KRISHNA) and SAMA are taught with a time tested ancient syllabus under one roof to young students who are admitted between 8-12 years. At present 145 students undergo training for a period ranging from 7 to 12 years and they are given free boarding, lodging, clothing, medication etc. 16 Adhyapakas impart knowledge to them.

After successful completion of their respective vedic courses, they are given encouragement for taking higher studies on Vedas and shastras by highly qualified Adhyapakas of our Patasala.

To overcome the growing expenses of our Patasala, donations are accepted under the following schemes. Kindly mention your mobile number, postal address, either PAN or AADHAR number while sending the donations. Donations are exempted under **80 G** in IT.

Name of the Scheme	Donation (Part Expenses)	Corpus Fund
Lunch to vedic students	Rs. 4500/- Rs. 2000/- **(Part Amount)**	Rs. 50,000/- Rs. 20,000/- **(Part Amount)**
For Rice and Dal	Rs. 3000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
For Education: Vedas & Shastras Siksha Rakshana Endowment per student	Rs. 18000/- P.A.	Rs. 3,00,000/-

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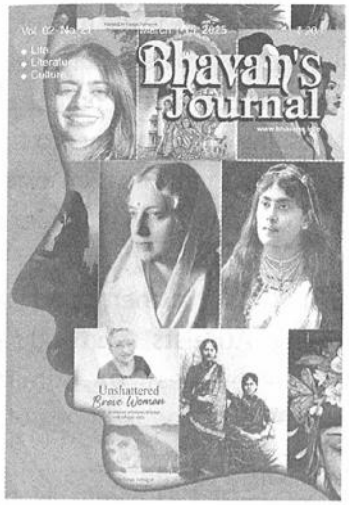
Innovation Culture



In *Bhavan's Journal* issue dated March 1-15, 2025, Mr. Ashok Prabhu has eloquently articulated the importance of a sustainable innovation culture in India. To my mind, the focus should be directed to roll out products that fully meet customers' demands in terms of design, efficiency, durability and variety. To quote Dave Haradon, a renowned marketing consultant, "The customer only wants three simple things: economical, perfect, and 'now'." Of course, it is understandable that no industry delivers it exactly, but attempts should be to come close to that, as the demands of the customers are critical and warrant a quick response. Obviously, the process calls for fine-tuned manufacturing and marketing strategies based on customers' needs and aspirations.

—Kelath Gopakumar Menon, Thrissur

Marvellous Patronage

With reference to the article 'Changing Lives of 27,500 Women' (published in *BJ* dated April 1-15, 2025), we have all heard of corporate social responsibility (CSR), endowments, freebies, benevolence and many such words. But this act by the owner of KPR Mill Limited, Mr. Ramasamy, is amazing and incredible in today's circumstances. While many people give something in expectation of something bigger, this great man's agenda is truly fabulous and sans selfishness. He has not only made KPR Mill proud, but has become a role model for every employer in the country. I wish KPR and his large family of beneficiaries a great future. May this type of corporate culture spread!

—Rajiv Magal, Karnataka

Atheists: Nowhere & Everywhere

This refers to 'Atheists—Genuine Thinkers' (published in *Bhavan's Journal* dated March 1-15, 2025). It delves into the core of belief systems. Humans are raised within these systems, becoming part of their structural framework. Outside of it, they remain blank. Atheists, however, are above belief systems. They are either indifferent to the unknown or view beliefs as fleeting, like passing clouds. Even if religious ideas pass by, they remain outside of them and above associated conflicts. As Socrates said, "Who knows if to live is to be dead, and to be dead, to live? And we really, may be, are dead; in fact I once heard sages say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb." Atheists live in the nest of their own creation. By being unattached to beliefs in God or religion, they feel that nothing really matters to them. According to them, life is an evolving process that goes on and on, except for momentary joy or abnormal suffering, and that there is no use in worrying. Atheists seem odd just because the rest of humanity remains within the confines of the systemic edifice.

—Dr. K.U. Mada, Mumbai

Thank You!

Thank you to all the staff and management of *Bhavan's Journal* for publishing my article 'Kaifi Azmi' in the April 1-15, 2025 issue. I appreciate the inclusion of several relevant pictures, which enhanced the story greatly and made it look glossier. The final production of this article was beyond my best expectations.

—Dr. J.V. Yakhmi, Mumbai

Lesson to Women

This is with reference to the article on Gangu Subbayya published in *BJ* dated March 1-15, 2025.

Though born to a rich family, the married life of Gangu Subbayya had been a total failure and the article vividly narrates the conviction and buoyancy with which she fought over and made her life a meaningful one by helping the poor and the needy.

It is not only a lesson to all women but to the entire human race. For many of us life is not a bed of roses but a series of adjustments throughout. The article was heartrending.

—V. Dhanasekharan, Puducherry

Bhavan's News

Central Bhavan, Mumbai

Farewell

Bhavan's Central office bid an emotional farewell to Shri P. R. Ambelkar, Deputy Registrar, on March 25, 2025, after 58 years of exemplary service. Joining the institution on January 16, 1967, he served with unwavering dedication even after his superannuation in 2008, continuing as Deputy Registrar till 2025. His colleagues celebrated his sincerity, humility, and immense contributions, making him a cherished pillar of the Bhavan family. His legacy of commitment and warmth will forever inspire those who had the privilege of working with him.

Superannuation

Mrs. Geetha Subramanian was working as an Assistant in Bhavan's Shikshan Bharati, Andheri, for the last 18 years. She attained superannuation on March 29, 2025. She was always a sincere, dedicated and hard-working staff member. Wishing her a happy life in the years ahead, to be filled with

new adventures and cherished moments.

Superannuation

Smt. Rajalakshmi attained superannuation on March 31, 2025, after putting in over 36 years of service. Bhavan's Tardeo office colleagues (Publication Division) gave her a warm and emotional farewell on March 29, 2025. Her colleagues, while wishing her a happy and peaceful life of retirement, appreciated her sincere and dedicated work. A few of her ex-colleagues and family members, too, were present at the occasion.

Thirunavaya Kendra

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Achievement Award

A.S. Madhavan, Chairman of Thirunavaya Kendra, was conferred with the 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Achievement Award 2025' at an event on February 22, 2025, at the ISKCON Auditorium in Juhu, Mumbai.

The 'People's Arts Centre' conferred A.S. Madhavan, managing trustee of Warrier Foundation, the Award for his philanthropic work in India.

Justice Abhay Thipsay (Retd.) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and presented the awards alongside Gopkumar Pillai, founder and secretary of the 45-year old charitable organisation 'People's Arts Centre'. A.S. Madhavan's philanthropic efforts have made a significant impact on various communities, promoting education, healthcare and spiritual growth. His work continues to be a beacon of hope to many others who wish to contribute to meaningful social causes and make a positive difference in the society.

Nilgiris Kendra

Tyagaraja Aradhana

The Nilgiris Kendra conducted the annual Tyagaraja Aradhana on February 9, 2025. Shri Anish Menon, Carnatic vocalist and music teacher from Coimbatore and a student of Malladi Brothers, presented an informative lec-dem on the Divya Nama and Utsava Sampradaya kirtanas of Shri Tyagaraja. The function was attended by music lovers from various parts of Nilgiris district.

Kulapati Munshi Award 2025

The Nilgiris Kendra presented the Kulapati Munshi Award for 2025 to Dr Meenakshi Venkataraman. The award ceremony was held on March 29, 2025.

Dr Meenakshi Venkataraman has a Ph.D. in Entomology and is an ecologist. She is a Complex Regional Pain warrior as she suffers from the problem of chronic pain and has also been diagnosed

with Parkinson's disease. Dr Meenakshi joined Dr Anubha Mahajan's Chronic Pain India, and in collaboration with other organisations, managed to make the Rights for People with Disability Act of 2016, add the pain scale as a measure for evaluating disability. The work of the team also saw the listing of 21 invisible diseases being given a forum at the 2024 International Purple Festival in Goa. In recognition of her work by the President of India, she was invited to Rashtrapati Bhavan in January 2025 for the 'at home' reception, and again in March 2025, to meet the President.

Meenakshi is an active member of the Rotary Club of Nilgiris West, and has been involved in the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group. She has created citizen science programmes on the river Bhavani and Jal Shakti, involving Rotary International clubs and local administration. Her community outreach includes work on farm-to-fork organic farming models in Hosur and introducing organic protocols for horticulture and biocontrol through DST grants.

The award was presented by Mrs Geetha Srinivasan, Vice Chairman of the Nilgiris Kendra, to Dr Meenakshi Venkataraman for her contributions in these diverse fields.

Jaipur Kendra

Debate

(i) The BVB Vidyashram team, comprising Aaditya Garg (Std. 11), Peehu Choudhary (Std. 11) and Dhruvi Sharma (Std. 11) secured the Second Position in an Inter-School English Debate Competition organised by Birla Public School, Kishangarh. Their remarkable performance earned them a cash prize of Rs. 5000.

(ii) Yathartha Kumar (Std. 10) won the First Position in a debate hosted by Army Public School, Jaipur. Speaking passionately on the topic 'Capitalism can Coexist with Social Welfare', Yathartha showcased exceptional debating skills and insightful arguments, bringing laurels to the school.

The Hindu Young World Quiz Competition

On November 27, 2024, students of BVB Vidyashram proudly showcased their excellence at the Hindu Young World Quiz Competition. Competing against over 750 students from 40 schools, the students demonstrated remarkable knowledge and teamwork.

In the Junior Category, Drishti Jhamnani and Lakshya Poonia of Std. 6 secured the Second Position, with their quick thinking and sharp intellect. In the Senior Category, A. Amartya and Kunal Kumawat earned the Sixth Position, displaying commendable dedication and enthusiasm.

Quiz Winners

The school team was runner-up in the G.K. Quiz organised by Economic Society on December 6, 2024, at Saint Xavier's College. The competition had six rounds and the team had a tough competition in all the rounds. The sixth round was the tiebreaker.

Schoolpex Awards 2024

The 25th Inter-School Stamp Exhibition, Schoolpex 2024, supported by India Posts, Rajasthan Circle, concluded on November 16, 2024, at St. Xavier's School, Jaipur. The Chief Guest of the programme was Ms. Preeti Sangwan, Principal of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Vidyashram. On the same day, a stamp of the Principal, Ms. Preeti Sangwan, was released by the General Post Office, Jaipur.

The students won the following prizes:

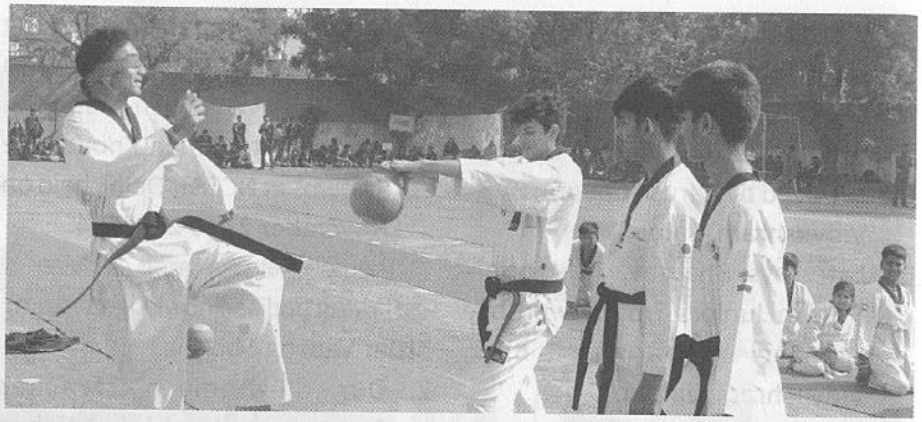
1. Late Shri O P Bhatnagar memorial Best School in Philately Trophy bagged by BVB Vidyashram, Jaipur.
2. Late Shri A.S. Mittal Memorial Innovative in Philately Trophy received by Aarush Chopra, BVB Vidyashram, Jaipur.
3. Late Jaya Bhargava Memorial Best in Juniors Trophy won by Manasvi Sharma, BVB Vidyashram, Jaipur.
4. AVIK Best Philately Mentor Award bagged by Smt. Deepika, TGT - Maths, BVB Vidyashram, Jaipur
5. 1st Position—Manasvini Sharma in Group B1.
6. 2nd Position—Manasvi Sharma (Group A1), Arnav Agarwal (Group B2), Tanishtha Sharma (Group B1)
   3rd Position—Gaurang Sharma (Group A1)

Accolades and Achievements of Mentors

1. Dr. Alok Sharma, TGT—Maths presented a paper in a two- day National Seminar on "Vedang Shiksha: from the Indian perspective with special reference to Indian Knowledge System" at NCERT, Delhi, held on November 28 to 29, 2024.
   Theme: भारतीय ज्ञान प्रणाली (आईकेएस) की निरंतरता (Indian knowledge system)
   Title: Vedang Shiksha
2. Our drama teacher Smt. Priyadarshini Mishra received the prestigious Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puruskar which carries a cash prize of Rs. 25,000/-

Annual Sports Meet

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Vidyashram, Pratap Nagar, organised its Annual Sports Meet, a two-day extravaganza that witnessed unparalleled enthusiasm and fervour. The mega event was held on 17th and 18th December, 2024. The event was graced by the distinguished



presence of Olympian Ms. Shagun Chowdhary as the chief guest.

The subsequent events were a testament to the students' exceptional talent and dedication. The parents also got an opportunity to showcase their athletic skills in the race organised for them. Somesh Balot and Harshal Garg were declared as the best athletes in the Senior Category. Akshat Pratap Sinha and Jaishree Parihar were declared as the best athletes in the Junior Category.

Visakhapatnam Kendra

Sankranthi Celebration

Bhavan's Public school celebrated Sankranthi with immense joy and cultural enthusiasm on January 9, 2025. The event was a beautiful amalgamation of traditional rituals and festivities, aimed at instilling a sense of cultural pride among the students.

The programme commenced with a traditional *Bhogi Manta* (bonfire) in the school premises, symbolising the burning of old habits and negativity while welcoming positivity and renewal. Students and teachers gathered around the bonfire, singing folk songs and sharing the significance of this ritual.

Cultural activities like folk dances, songs, and Kollattam and rangoli competitions brought the essence of the festival to life. Parents participated in great numbers and enjoyed the event.

Chandigarh Kendra

Lohri Celebrations

On January 13, 2025, Bhavan Vidyalaya New Chandigarh embraced the festive spirit of Lohri with an event that brought joy and a sense of togetherness to all.

The highlight of the festivities was the ceremonial lighting of the Lohri fire by the Principal, Ms Inderpreet Kaur, and Vice Principal, Ms Ramneek Kaur Malhotra, symbolising prosperity and hope. The joyous atmosphere was enhanced by the singing of *boliyaan* by students, teachers and staff. Traditional sweets like *rewari* and *gajak* were distributed, spreading happiness among everyone.

Kolkata Kendra

Celebrating Brother-Sister Relationship

The pre-primary students of Bhavan's Gangabux Kanoria Vidyamandir celebrated the beautiful bond of the brother-sister relationship through three significant festivals: Bhai Phonta from Bengal, Raksha Bandhan from North India, and Karthigai Deepam from South India. A heart-warming skit conveyed the spirit of Raksha Bandhan, emphasising the importance of protecting and caring for each other, regardless of biological relationships.

The celebration culminated with the students dancing to the iconic song "Heal the World". This finale embraced a universal approach, fostering a sense of mutual respect, care, and protection to inspire positive changes in the world.

Dipti Dev International Cultural Festival

Oishani Dhua of Std. 11 secured the first position in Odissi (Solo) in the Dipti Dev International Cultural festival 2024, organised by the Jadavpur Navrang Art and Culture Centre, held on December 27, 2024, at the Bidhan Chandra Roy Auditorium, Sealdah.

National Youth Day

On January 13, 2025, Bhavan's Gangabux Kanoria Vidyamandir (BGKV), Salt Lake, observed National Youth Day in the school premises by celebrating the 162nd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Students of different classes paid tribute to this great personality through various activities. They had been involved in collage-making, singing hymns composed by Swamiji, enacting stories of his life, doing yoga and meditation (which Swamiji had emphasised deeply), chanting oaths with the determination to build a better nation, and reciting poems dedicated to him.

Indian Space Science Olympiad

Ishaan Chowdhury of Std. 6 secured the 1st Rank in the Junior Category (Std. 5-7) in the Indian Space Science Olympiad 2024, held at IISc Bangalore from December 27 to 29, 2024. The event was conducted by Edumithra Intellectual Services Pvt. Ltd. The winner was rewarded with a medal, a merit certificate and a telescope.

Annual Day

Bhavan's Mehta Vidyalaya, K.G. Marg, New Delhi, celebrated its 66th Annual Day on November 18, 2024, with great enthusiasm. The distinguished Chief Guest for the occasion was Shri Banwari Lal Purohit, Chairman of Delhi Kendra, and Shri C.S. Vaidyanathan, Chairman of the School Management Committee (SMC), was the Guest of Honour. During the ceremony, meritorious teachers and students were felicitated for their outstanding contributions. The cultural programme, titled *'Bharat Shining'*, captivated the audience with a dance-drama that focused on the importance of Sustainable Development Goals and environmental stewardship. Inspired by Dr. K.M. Munshi's vision of harmony with nature, 100 saplings were distributed to promote tree plantation and environmental responsibility.

Winter Carnival – 2024

The inaugural Winter Carnival, held at Bhavan's Mehta Vidyalaya, K.G. Marg, New Delhi, on December 24, 2024, was a vibrant celebration of creativity, culture and

sustainability, bringing together students, parents and staff in a spirit of unity. Graced by distinguished dignitaries, the event featured a variety of traditional games, eco-friendly initiatives, artisanal crafts, and a wide range of culinary offerings.

Training of Trainers (ToT)

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi, launched a two-day Training of Trainers (ToT) certification course in collaboration with the Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM). The course was aimed at enhancing the skills of educators across India. The training course, held on January 17 and 19, was held at Bhavan's B. P. Vidya Mandir, Koradi, Nagpur. It saw the participation of 88 educators from Nagpur and the adjoining districts of Yavatmal, Amravati, Akola, Chandrapur, Wardha and Gondia. It focused on effective training techniques, innovative teaching methodologies, and the integration of ICT in education.

Panchkula Kendra

Veer Baal Diwas

Bhavan Vidyalaya Panchkula celebrated Veer Baal Diwas with great enthusiasm, honouring the martyrdom of the four *Sahibzadas* of Guru Gobind Singhji. Aligned with the nationwide theme 'Veerta', the celebration included activities such as Slogan Writing, Teacher Talks, Student Discussions, Essay Writing, Assembly Talks and a Painting Competition depicting the lives and sacrifices of the *Sahibzadas*.

Indian National Mathematical Olympiad (INMO)

YAJAT AGGARWAL OM GARG DAKSH AGGARWAL NISKARSH

Six students from Bhavan Vidyalaya, Panchkula—Yajat Aggarwal, Om Garg, Daksh Aggarwal, Niskarsh, Tanav Gupta and Arnav Gandhi—have been selected for the prestigious Indian National Mathematical Olympiad (INMO). Furthermore, two students have qualified for additional esteemed competitions.

- Niskarsh qualified for the Indian National Physics Olympiad (INPhO)
- Tanav Gupta qualified for the Indian National Chemistry Olympiad (INChO)

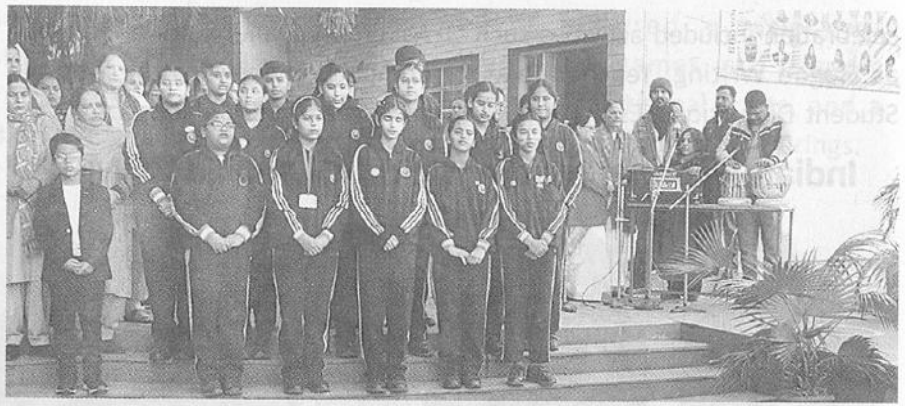
TANAV GUPTA ARNAV GANDHI

NISKARSH
Qualified For INPhO

TANAV GUPTA
Qualified For INChO

Republic Day

Bhavan Vidyalaya, Panchkula, celebrated the 76th Republic Day of India on January 26, 2025, with immense enthusiasm and patriotic fervour. The celebrations reflected the school's dedication to fostering national pride and civic responsibility in students across



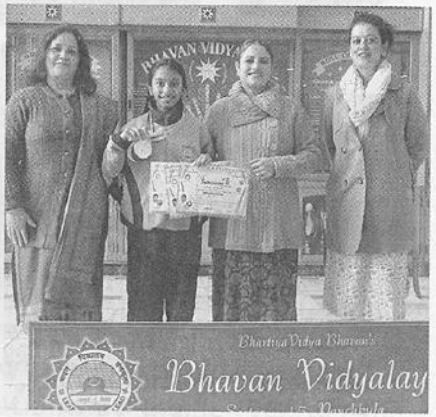
all age groups. Patriotic songs, presented by the Music Department, enhanced the spirit of unity. Selected students proudly represented the school at the Parade Ground, Sector 5, Panchkula. NCC cadets displayed discipline and commitment, while a group of talented dancers performed a mesmerizing patriotic dance performance, 'Steps of Unity' (*Ek Kadam Ekta Ki Aur*), which received accolades from the audience.

VVM Camp

Arpita Panigrahi, a student of Bhavan Vidyalaya Panchkula, achieved the first rank at the State-Level Camp of Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) held at HAU, Hisar. Her exceptional performance earned her a memento and a cash prize of Rs. 5000.

The 10th Asian Yoga Sports Championship

A Panchkula Bhavanite, Anaisha Aggarwal has made India proud by winning two silver and one bronze medal in traditional yogasana, artistic solo, and rhythmic yoga events at the 10th Asian Yoga Sports Championship held in Singapore. She was a part of a 45-member contingent sent from India. She started practising yoga at the tender age of six years. She has achieved the feat under the able guidance of her yoga teachers, Smt. Shivani Sachdeva and Smt. Meenakshi, at Bhavan Vidyalaya.



Prestigious Certificate

The NCC Cadets of Bhavan Vidyalaya, Panchkula, have successfully completed the Combined Annual Training Camp (CATC) and earned the prestigious 'Certificate A' from the NCC Directorate. This significant achievement highlights the cadets' dedication, discipline, and commitment to the ideals of the National Cadet Corps.

Kochi Kendra

Munshi Memorial Oration

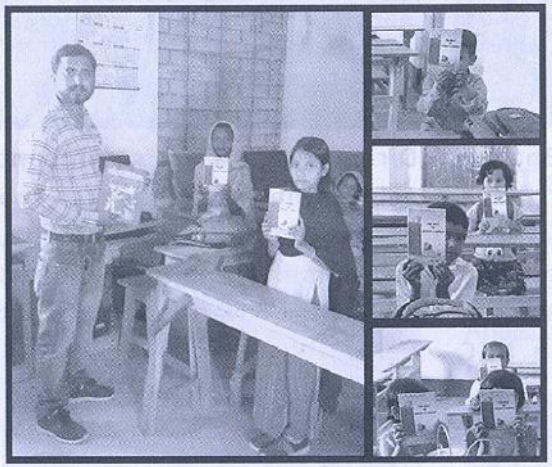
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kochi Kendra, celebrated the 6th Kulapati Dr. K. M. Munshi Memorial Oration on December 30, 2024, at the Sardar Patel Sabha Griha, T.D. Road, Ernakulam. The event marked the birth anniversary of Dr. K. M. Munshi, the visionary founder of the institution, with an intellectually enriching programme that brought together educators, students and dignitaries.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address delivered by Dr. Sandeep Shastri, Director (Academic) of NITTE Education

Trust, Bangalore, and National Co-ordinator of the Lokniti Network. Speaking on the topic "Education for 21st Century Needs—With Focus on Teaching to Learning Paradigm", Dr. Shastri provided a thought-provoking analysis of modern educational challenges and opportunities.

West Bengal

Dr. K. M. Munshi Quiz Contest



Winners of the Dr. K. M. Munshi Quiz contest from Tharais FPS, Uttara Dinajpur, West Bengal, received our books as prizes. Tharais is a village in the Uttara Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

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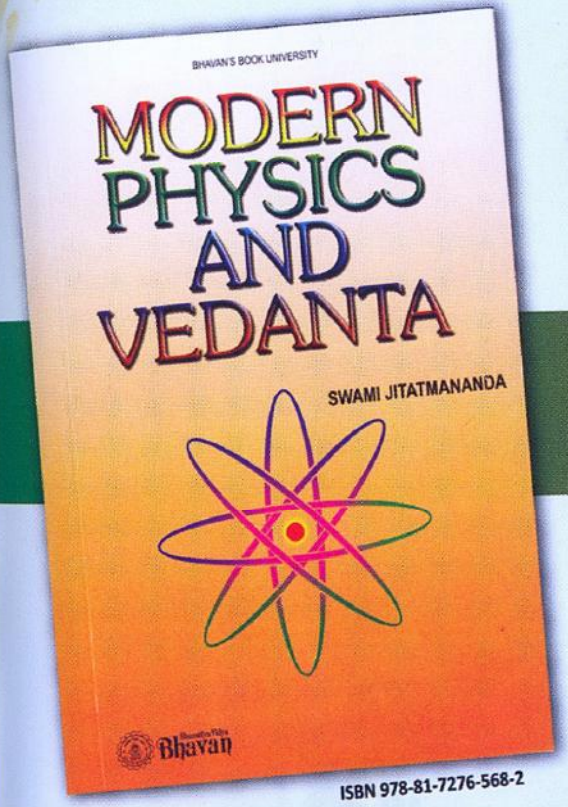

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